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THE
PORTFOLIO

MONOGRAPHS ON ARTISTIC SUBJECTS

EDITED BY P. G. HAMERTON

J. BASTIEN-LEPAGE

By JULIA CARTWRIGHT

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

By F. G. STEPHENS

FREDERICK WALKER

By CLAUDE PHILLIPS

LONDON

SEELEY AND CO., LIMITED, ESSEX STREET, STRAND

NEW YORK : MACMILLAN AND CO.

1894

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JULES BASTIEN-LEPAGE

By

JULIA CARTWRIGHT

(MRS. HENRY ADY)

Author of "Sacharissa," "Madame," &c.



LONDON

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JULES BASTIEN-LEPAGE

PART I

Qu'il soit donc permis à chacun et à tous de voir avec les yeux qu'ils ont . . . Dans tous les arts, la victoire sera toujours à quelques privilégiés "qui se laissèrent aller eux-mêmes, et les discussions d'école passeront comme passent les modes."

GEORGE SAND.

Birth and early years of the Artist—His home and family—Education at Verdun—Choice of a profession—Paris training and first pictures—He serves in the war—Is wounded in the siege of Paris—Success of "Mon Grandpère"—His theories of art and independent principles—He exhibits "La Communiant"e—Competes for the Prix de Rome—Paints "L'Annonciation" and "Priam."

I

THE ways of Fate are strange. One painter attains greatness, almost without an effort, and leads a long and prosperous life, loaded with riches and rewards. Another, gifted with genius as unquestionable, struggles through years of poverty and despair, and after his death the pictures which he painted for bread are sold for thousands of pounds. One master outlives all his contemporaries and goes down to the grave full of years and honours. Another is cut off in the flower of manhood, with a glorious career opening before him and fame and fortune both within his reach.

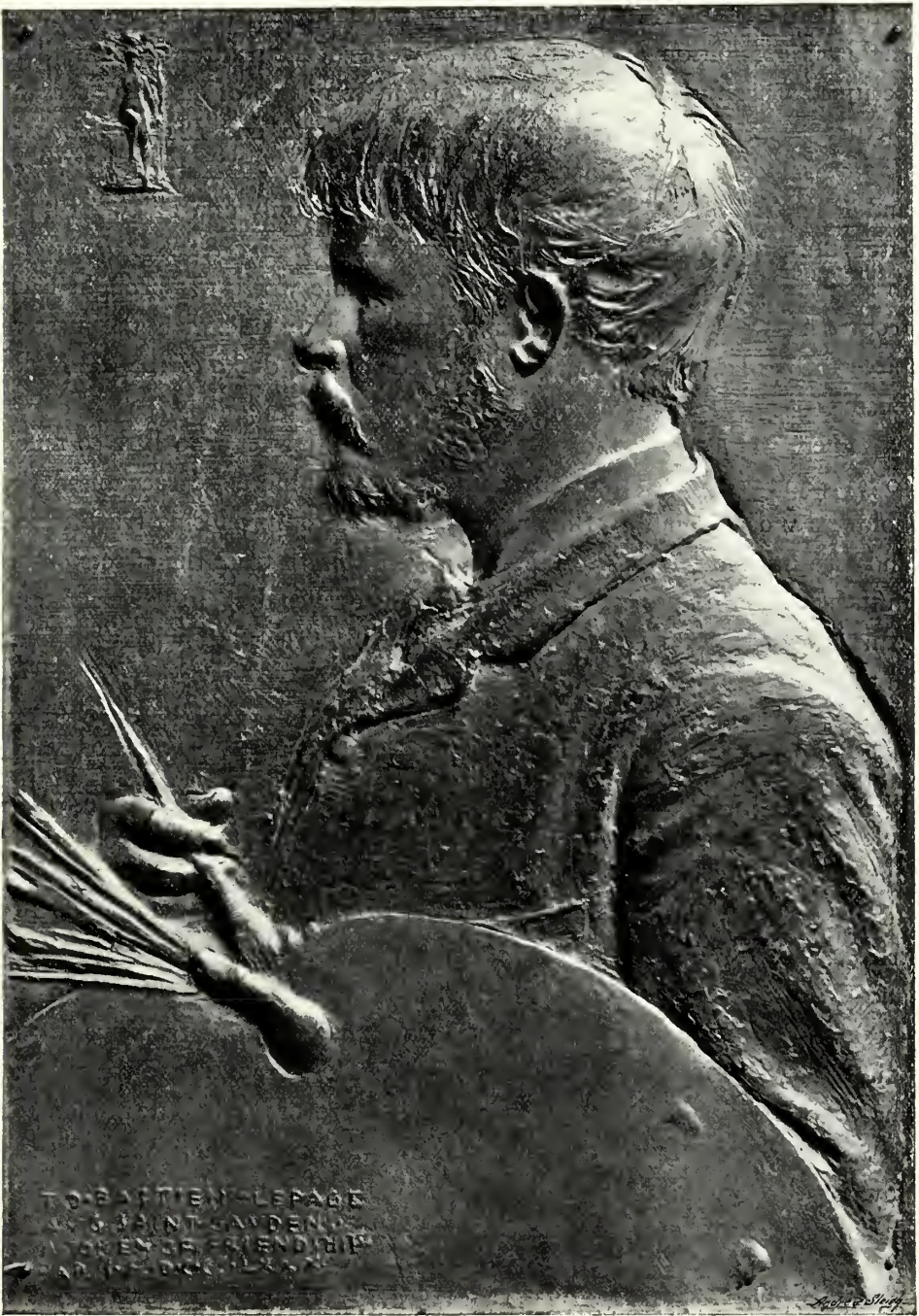
The name of Bastien-Lepage is still fresh in our ears. His works are almost as well known in England as they are in France. The frequent visits which he paid us during his short lifetime had made his presence familiar in London. It seems only the other day that he was

here with us, and we can hardly believe that more than nine years have already passed away since the winter evening on which he died. Among all the men of genius in this generation who have perished in their prime, among all of those upon whom—"Mournfully grating, the gates of the city of death have for ever closed"—not one deserved to be more deeply lamented.

When Raphael died, and left a name supreme among painters, he was only thirty-seven. But then Raphael was born at Urbino, and lived in the golden age of painting. From the day when he opened his eyes in the brightest of climes to that sad Good Friday which robbed the world of his glory, there was nothing to hinder the development of his genius or to cloud the serenity of his art. Bastien-Lepage belonged to a later day, and his life was led under harder conditions. He was born under gray northern skies, in an obscure village of eastern France. His parents were poor, and he had to make his own way in the world. His boyhood was spent among peasants and bourgeois who knew nothing of art, and had never seen a good picture. In his native village there were no great masters, no duke or duchess to look kindly on his first attempts and send him with letters of introduction to other cities. There were no Popes and cardinals to set him to work on Vatican walls or Farnesina ceilings. He came to Paris as a clerk in the Post-Office and served as a franc-tireur in the war of 1870. The whole of his artistic career covers a period of about twelve years. And both powers of brain and hand were at their height when he was attacked by the cruel disease which brought his life to an untimely end at thirty-six years of age. Great as his actual achievement had been, no one who knew him could doubt that greater things were still to come. But Death stepped in, and hopes and dreams were scattered to the winds.

"But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears,
And slits the thin-spun life."

"But not the praise." That at least endures. In spite of the rapid changes of fashion in modern painting, in spite of the new phase on which French art has entered within the last few years, the name of Bastien-Lepage is still held in high repute in his native land. In that famous



Jules Bastien-Lepage. From a Relief by A. Saint-Gaudens.

collection of the century's art which formed so remarkable a feature of the Paris Exhibition five years ago, the works of the painter of Damvillers occupied a prominent place. Among them were two of his finest peasant pictures, *Les Foins*, now the property of the State, and *Les Ramasseuses de Pommes-de-terre*, and many of his best portraits. *L'Amour au Village* and *Père Jacques*, it is true, were missing, and only one or two of his later drawings were to be seen. But *Jeanne d'Arc écoutant les Voix*, in some respects his finest and most memorable work, was brought back from America for the occasion, and hung side by side with the masterpieces of Millet and of Courbet, under the central dome of the Palais des Beaux Arts.

There we saw once more the work of this master who had so much to say, and so little time to say it in. Once more we recognised the boldness and originality of his invention, his uncompromising truthfulness and rare intensity of expression. We were able to trace the effects of his influence upon living artists, not only in France but in England and America, and to realise better than ever before the place which he holds in the art movement of the present age.

Mr. Ruskin has told us that the art which is especially devoted to the representation of natural fact always indicates a peculiar thoughtfulness and gentleness of character. In the case of Bastien-Lepage, the rule certainly holds good. The personality of the man is as interesting as his pictures. The frankness and simplicity of his nature, his affectionate disposition and enthusiasm for his art, gained him many friends. Long after he was dead, his comrades remembered him fondly, and treasured up the bits of advice which he had given them at their work or the careless pleasant words which had dropped from his lips in idle hours. "Ah ! let us talk about Bastien !" wrote the distinguished master, M. Dagnan Bouveret, soon after his brother artist's death. "He is always present with me, and whenever I paint a new picture I ask myself if it would have satisfied him." Fortunately for us, several of his friends have recorded their impressions of the man. In 1885, M. André Theuriet, the well-known novelist and poet, published a small volume bearing the title of "*Jules Bastien-Lepage, L'homme et l'artiste*" and giving a brief memoir of his life as well as several of his letters. At the same time, two articles from the pen of M. de Fourcaud, appeared in

the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, in which this accomplished critic gave the world some interesting recollections of Bastien-Lepage, which he afterwards published in a more complete form in M. Baschet's series of *Les Maîtres Modernes*. To another intimate friend, the sculptor Auguste Saint Gaudens, we owe the bronze relief here reproduced. It was executed in 1880, and inscribed with the words "A Token of Friendship," and is at once an excellent likeness of the painter and a fine work of art. A glance at Bastien-Lepage's origin and at the circumstances of his life will help us better than many pages of criticism to understand the full meaning and intention of his works. For his art was the spontaneous outcome of his home life. His impressions of nature were taken from the woods and fields of his native Lorraine, his models were the peasants of Damvillers, the men and women whom he had known from his childhood, and all his larger and more important pictures were painted in his home—that home to which he clung with a love so passionate and true, and where he sleeps to-day in the green churchyard under the apple-trees.

II

Jules Bastien-Lepage, the painter of *Jeanne d'Arc* and of *Les Foins* was born on the first of November, 1848, at Damvillers, a village near Verdun, in the department of La Meuse. Three hundred years before, Damvillers had been a town of some importance. During the reign of Francis I. it was strongly fortified, and was besieged on one occasion by the Emperor Charles V. In the seventeenth century its towers and bastions were razed to the ground by order of Louis XIV. Now the last remnants of the old walls have crumbled into dust, and apple orchards bloom in the grass-grown trenches. A clear stream, the river Tinte, flows through the green meadows, and vine-clad hills rise in gentle slopes on either side of the valley, where the red roofs cluster round the village church with the low spire, which figures in more than one of Bastien-Lepage's paintings. But to those who know his works, the whole character of the place wears a curiously familiar aspect. The broad lines of the landscape, the plains bounded by undulating hills,

the very shape of the houses in the village street seem to recall his pictures.

A straight road, fringed with tall poplar trees, leads to the market-square, where the little life of the place centres. Here the diligence from Verdun stops in front of the village inn, and here at one corner of the *Grande Place* is the house which belonged to the artist's father, Claude Bastien. A roomy comfortable house it is, but as unpretending as any of its neighbours, with the same white walls, drab shutters, and brown tiled roof. The front door opens into a large kitchen, where bright copper pans are ranged along the high mantelpiece, and rows of the coloured earthenware of the district fill the cupboard shelves. Beyond, is the parlour, where on winter evenings the young artist made his first studies with chalk and pencil, while his father read and his mother mended the household linen. Like most of the inhabitants of Damvillers, the Bastiens were small peasant-proprietors, who cultivated their own fields, and lived on the produce. Their home was shared by Jules' grandfather, old Lepage, a retired tax-collector, whose small pension helped to keep the modest household in comparative ease. They were frugal and thrifty souls, working hard to make an honest living, anxious above all to bring up their two sons well, and give them a good start in the world. But if their fare was plain, and their manner of life homely, their tastes were not without refinement. The father was fond of drawing, the mother embroidered patterns of her own tracing, and the old grandfather took the greatest delight in his garden, which was always the gayest to be seen in Damvillers. When, at a very early age, Jules began to show signs of a taste for drawing, his father determined to cultivate the boy's talent in the hope of qualifying him when he grew up, for some post in the Administration of forests and highways. So he himself gave Jules his first drawing lessons, and every night before the child went to bed, he was required to make a careful copy of the lamp or inkstand on the table, or any other object in the room. To this early training the painter himself always attributed that habit of close observation and exact accuracy which distinguished him in after years. At the age of eleven he left the communal school to go to the College of Verdun. Here his talent for drawing soon attracted the notice of his teachers, and the college drawing

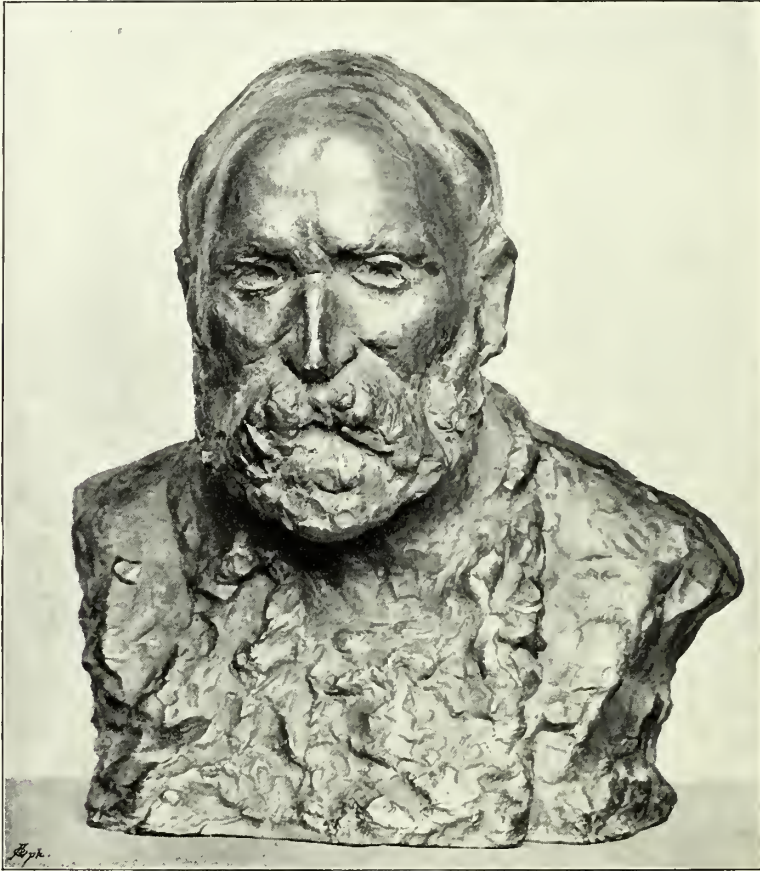
master, a professor named Fouquet, one day told him that he ought to be an artist. The idea took possession of the boy's mind, and soon became a settled determination. At home or at school, he was always drawing, on the margin of his lesson books, on the doors and walls. Even the palings of his father's orchard, it is said, bore traces of the charcoal sketches in which his early attempts at composition were made. The little albums which contained his first sketches were carefully preserved



Pen-and-Ink Sketch of the Artist's Grandfather.

by his mother. On one page was a drawing of his little brother Emile sitting in a toy cart, which was done by Jules when he was only five years old, on another, a more elaborate attempt to represent Abraham sacrificing Isaac. When, at the age of eighteen, he left college, he informed his parents that he wished to go to Paris and study painting. This startling announcement filled his family with consternation. His father was horrified to think that Jules, whom he had destined for an official career, and for whose education many sacrifices had already

been made, should throw away all his chances in this reckless way. On the one hand, there was the prospect of a long and expensive training, and, at best, a very precarious means of livelihood. On the other, there was the certainty of an honourable position, with regular pay from



The Artist's Father. Bust in bronze.

Government, and a modest pension in old age. So Claude Bastien argued, not without a show of reason on his side. The boy's grandfather was entirely of the same opinion. Only the kind mother took her son's part. In spite of her horror of Paris, and her dread of the dangers to which he might be exposed in the great city, she could

not bear to see his ardent hopes disappointed. "If it is really Jules' wish," she pleaded gently. But still his father was inflexible.

Fortunately for the painter at this crisis, a relation who held an influential position in the Bureau des Postes, intervened and proposed a plan which pleased all parties and was eventually adopted. By his advice, Jules passed an examination which qualified him for the post of assistant in the Post-Office, and towards the end of the year 1867, was summoned to Paris as supernumerary clerk. Here he worked hard during the next six months, sorting letters from three to seven in the early morning, and attending the courses of instruction at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in the intervals of office hours. But the difficulty of reconciling the serious study of art with the daily routine of official duties was great and the strain soon proved beyond his strength. He fell ill, and it became plain that he must choose between the two professions. As far as Jules himself was concerned, the choice had been already made. His friends on their part now saw that further opposition would be useless and acquiesced cheerfully in his decision. His grandfather gave all he could spare out of his small savings, and his mother went out to field work to earn money for Jules. At the same time, the Council-General of the department of La Meuse voted a sum of six hundred francs towards his support. When all was reckoned the young student had barely enough to keep body and soul together. But his native courage and good spirits, together with that invincible tenacity of purpose which was so marked a feature of his character stood him in good stead, and helped him through the trials and difficulties of the next few years.

III

In 1868 Jules Bastien entered the Ecole des Beaux Arts as a regular student, and was received as a pupil in the atelier of M. Cabanel. At that time the studio of this versatile and prolific painter was the most popular in Paris. He was singularly successful in developing talent of the most varied kind, and in the Salon of 1886 no less than 112 exhibitors

are said to have signed themselves pupils of Cabanel. The experienced teacher soon discovered the talent of the young student from La Meuse, who rapidly took the foremost place among his fellows. But Bastien himself had little sympathy with the system of the schools, and at the end of a few months he began to work on his own line, and was seldom seen in the atelier. In 1870 he made his first appearance in the Salon. The portrait which he exhibited on this occasion was that of a young architect in a dark-green coat, sitting at work at a table. There was vigour enough in the painting and in the character of the head to attract attention, and the artist would probably have received other commissions had it not been for the war which broke out that summer. He remained in Paris during the siege, and served in a company of franc-tireurs, under the captaincy of the painter Castellani. One day, when he was gallantly fighting in the trenches, he was wounded in the chest by a shell which exploded near him, and on the same day, by a strange fatality, another shell struck his modest atelier in the boulevard of Montparnasse, and made a hole in a picture which he had lately painted, of a nymph bathing her feet in a stream of running water, called *La Source*. The canvas was ruined and the artist remained in hospital until the end of the siege. When the Peace of Versailles was signed, he went home to Damvillers in a weak and suffering state to recruit his shattered health in his native air. There he remained enjoying the quiet of the country, and painting the portraits of his neighbours for practice, until the close of the year. When he returned to Paris, early in 1872, times were bad, and the struggle for life was harder than ever before. But he persevered with the same unflinching resolution as before. He painted portraits of his friends for small sums, tried his hand at illustrating newspapers, and when he was at his wits' end for a job, decorated fans and painted signs for shopkeepers. Many years afterwards, when Bastien-Lepage was a great man, the landlady of a restaurant in the Quartier-Latin, much frequented by struggling artists, Mademoiselle Anna, by name, would point with pride to a picture hanging over her door, called *La Jeunesse dorée*, representing a green forest glade, where lovers whisper under the boughs, and laughing cherubs flit in and out among the trees. That panel, she told her customers, was the work of Bastien-

Lepage, who had painted it for her, in payment of a debt of three hundred francs.

One day, a seller of perfumes and cosmetics asked Bastien to supply him with a pictorial advertisement which should help the sale of his goods. After some deliberation, the artist produced a little picture in the style of Watteau, representing the fountain of perpetual youth, springing up in a green meadow where bright-haired loves gambol, and youths and maidens come hand in hand to drink of the waters which are to make them for ever young and fair. When the work was finished, Bastien asked his employer's leave to send it to the Salon. The shopkeeper made no objection, but insisted that the name of the cosmetic which he wished to advertise, and the address of his shop should be painted on a coloured scroll in the upper part of the picture. Bastien declined to agree to this condition and the bargain fell through. The painter lost his money, but his picture was exhibited in the Salon of 1873, under the title *Au Printemps*. The graceful and delicate fancies of Puvis de Chavannes had for him a singular fascination at this period of his career, and his next picture bore marked signs of this master's influence. This was another little panel, in the same style as the last, and bore the name of *La Chanson du Printemps*. The subject was a little peasant-girl with a basket of violets on her arm, sitting on a grassy bank at the edge of a wood, listening with wondering eyes to the songs of the dancing cherubs who flutter about her on butterfly-wings and pipe to her of the coming of Spring and the awakening of Love. This time a touch of realism came to mingle with the poet's fancy. The girl was a peasant-child from the artist's own village, and in the distance behind her were the green meadows and red-roofed houses of Damvillers. This graceful little picture attracted considerable attention at the time, and when the Salon closed, it was bought by the State and placed in the Luxembourg. But in that same Salon of 1874, there was another picture by the same hand which created an unexpected sensation. This was the large portrait of the artist's grandfather which he exhibited under the title of *Mon Grandpère*, and signed with the name Jules Bastien-Lepage. The young painter had adopted the name of Lepage, out of gratitude and respect to his mother's family, and from this time he used it in addition to his

own surname. During the summer holidays he had conceived the idea of painting the portrait of the old man sitting out-of-doors under the trees of his garden, among the flowers which he cultivated with so much care. With that scrupulous veracity which was an essential part of Bastien-Lepage's character, he has represented his grandfather in his common suit of clothes, exactly as he might have been seen on any day of the week at Damvillers. The old man wears a faded brown vest and worn gray trousers. His velvet cap is on his head, his spectacles on his nose, and his large horn snuff-box and blue check handkerchief are laid on his knee. His hands are crossed before him, and he leans back in his favourite arm-chair with a satisfied, amused expression on his kindly old face. There is no attempt at pose, no seeking after effect. The picture is painted in clear, ordinary daylight, without any strong contrasts of light and shade, of colour, or of style. Yet the whole thing is instinct with life, and the figure stands out with vivid actuality against the background of pale green leaves and grass. The appearance of this striking portrait by the hand of a new painter was the event of that year's Salon. On the day when the doors were opened, a crowd gathered before the picture, and the popular interest increased, when it became known that it was the work of a young student of the Ecole des Beaux Arts. The next day all the papers were talking of *Mon Grandpère*, and Bastien-Lepage woke up one morning to find himself famous. The novelty of the artist's conception and his unconventional methods naturally provoked discussion. But the accuracy of the drawing and the power of the painting were beyond dispute, and everyone felt that great things might be expected from an artist who could interpret nature in so vigorous and penetrating a manner.

IV

M. Theuriet has told us how he met Bastien-Lepage for the first time, standing before his portrait of *Mon Grandpère* in the Salon. Himself a native of La Meuse, the writer hailed the artist with pleasure as a fellow-countryman. He describes Bastien-



J. Bastien-Lepage pinxit.

Laford in ph. sc.

The Artist's Grandfather.

Lepage as very youthful in appearance, small and fair, with a slight and boyish but active and muscular frame. His forehead was square, his nose short and flattened, his light wavy hair fell in a thick tuft over his brow, his gray-blue eyes were keen and piercing. Sincerity and determination were written in every line of his face. His speech was as honest and straightforward as his countenance. After the first shyness had worn off, he gave free rein to his natural gaiety and became the best and most sociable of companions. The energy and determination of his character, his scrupulous conscientiousness in his work and scorn of artifice and convention earned for him the name of *Le Primitif*, which was frequently applied to him by his comrades. The same originality and independence marked all his views of art. "People pay me compliments about these fables," he said when a well-known critic, M. de Fourcaud admired his graceful little allegories—"but I have not yet found the work which I mean to do." And when his companion pressed him further as to his intentions, he replied without a moment's hesitation: "Nothing is good but truth. People ought to paint what they know and love. I come from a village in Lorraine. I mean, first of all, to paint the peasants and landscapes of my home exactly as they are. I will also paint a Jeanne d'Arc, a real Jeanne d'Arc, who shall belong to our 'coin de terre,' and not to my atelier. Afterwards, when I have had time to study the people in Paris, I shall try and paint Paris life, but that will not be for a long time to come. My comrades praise my portraits. I am proud of that, for I believe that everything in nature, even a tree, even still-life should be treated as a portrait. You never find two objects which look exactly the same. The work of talent is to distinguish between the two, and to point out what is peculiar to each one. That is my whole theory of art."

He never could reconcile himself to the system of teaching in the Ecole des Beaux Arts, and on one occasion in after years, he expressed himself very strongly on the subject to M. de Fourcaud.

"I have no complaints to make of any one. On the contrary, I retain the most grateful recollection of many persons who owed me nothing, and who gave me a great deal. I learnt my trade in Paris and I have not forgotten that. But, to speak frankly, I did not learn my art there. The Ecole des Beaux Arts is managed by masters whose high



La Communiant.

qualities and devotion I should be the last to ignore. But is it my fault, if I found in their atelier the only doubts which have ever perplexed me? When I tried for the Prix de Rome, the newspapers described me as independent and free from the bondage of traditions. Alas! I am not yet as free from them as I should like to be! When I came to Paris, I knew nothing at all, but at least I was ignorant of the heap of formulas with which you are perverted there. You wish to paint what you see, and instead of this, you are urged to aim at an unknown ideal, that is to say, to imitate old pictures more or less. I made daubs, in the schools, of gods and goddesses, of Greeks and Romans, of whom I knew nothing, which I did not understand and only laughed at. I used to say to myself that this might be great art, and now I sometimes ask myself what good have I got out of all this training. I do not go so far as to say that you ought to paint absolutely nothing but what you see in everyday life, but I do say this: if you take subjects from ancient history, at least let them be represented in an altogether human manner, exactly as you see the same things happen around you. What a pity it is, to be initiated, whether you like it or not, into certain traditions and a certain routine of work, under pretence of training! It would be so much simpler to teach you how to handle brush and palette, without telling you of Michelangelo and Raphael, of Murillo and Domenichino. Then you would go home to Brittany, or Gascony, to Lorraine or Normandy, wherever you came from. There you would quietly draw the portrait of your own province, and when one morning, by chance, after reading some book, you were seized with the wish to paint the Prodigal Son, or Priam at the feet of Achilles, or anything else of the same kind, you would imagine the scene after your own fancy, free from recollections of picture galleries, but set in a frame of your own country, with the best models you could find at hand, as if the old story were a thing of yesterday. In that way you would succeed in animating art with a true life, and would make it beautiful and touching for all the world. That is the aim towards which I press with my whole strength. As long as I stay at Damvillers, I think myself sure of my ground, but in Paris there are moments when I can see nothing clearly."

The longer Bastien-Lepage lived, the deeper and more firmly-rooted his convictions on this subject became. One day, when he

had reached the height of his fame, a young artist who was a native of a distant province of France, was brought to him by a friend and showed him one or two small pictures which he had carefully imitated from Bastien-Lepage's own works. The painter was on the point of starting for Damvillers, and replied with a touch of impatience : "You wish me to tell you what I think ! Well, you know how to paint, but you are too fond of looking at other people's pictures, and most of all at mine. You tell me you belong to a village far away from here ? Then, why in the world do you stay in Paris ? Go and pack up, buy some canvas and colours and go home to your own country. Paint your house, your trees, your peasants, your bourgeois, just as they are, and bring your pictures back to next year's Salon. An artist who belongs to no part of the world is a useless being ! Believe me and go home."

The freedom with which this advice was given might not always prove acceptable, but at least it was honestly meant. To the end of his life, Bastien-Lepage declared that he could think more clearly and paint better at Damvillers than he could in Paris. Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that he despised the work of the old masters. He had, it is true, a horror of conventional rules and fixed traditions in art, and always maintained that every artist ought to paint his subjects in his own way and from his own point of view. But he had the deepest admiration for the great art of the past, and some of his happiest hours in Paris were those which he spent in the Louvre.

Naturally the great Dutch and German masters appealed to him in a special manner and were the object of his most attentive study. He would grow eloquent in front of Holbein's portraits and Rembrandt's *Good Samaritan*. "That is the way in which Scriptural or historical subjects should be treated," he exclaimed one day when he stood with M. de Fourcaud before this picture. "Let us simply try and bring them back to every-day life. A traveller has been picked up, half dead, on a heap of stones. He is carried to the nearest farm and at first the master hesitates whether he will take him in, but the servants come running up ; they see the wounded man in a fainting state. 'Come, there is no time,' they cry. 'Let us receive this unhappy

stranger and nurse him for he is badly hurt.' The mule remains standing at the door, faithful beast! There must be a dog somewhere behind that wall. There you have your Good Samaritan. What is the use of trying to put the clock back, at this time of day?" Again, the portraits of the old French master, Clouet, never failed to kindle his admiration. Their fine brushwork and exquisite finish, above all their power of rendering the expression of a face by what he called sheer intensity of drawing, were to him a perpetual source of wonder. The simple directness and sincerity of the old Florentines and Umbrians touched him deeply, and he was fond of saying that if we moderns were ever to do anything in art, it must be by working in their spirit. What pleased him most was the human side of their art, their evident sympathy with childhood, their love for the birds of the air and the flowers of the field. The roses of Botticelli, the daisies and columbines of Perugino, the tall white lilies which Lippi's angels bear in their hands, and the starry blossoms which spring up in the grass of Angelico's Paradise, filled his heart with delight, and he was fond of showing how these simple natural beauties find a place in their representations of the world's greatest dramas, in front of the manger of Bethlehem and at the foot of the cross of Calvary.

Among modern artists, the French landscape-painters of the school of 1830 interested him deeply. But here again his judgments were as independent and as freely expressed as on other subjects. "Corot," he said to M. de Fourcaud one day, "helps you to breathe, but there is more air in his pictures than there is earth or rocks or trees. He dreams of the country all the while he is painting it. Daubigny is afraid of nothing. He paints—better than any one else I know—the green meadows, the beautiful fields where everything grows. He adores the running stream and the setting sun and the rising moon. Only he is exactly the opposite of Corot and does not dream enough."

Good work, however different in practice and theory from his own, never failed to secure Bastien-Lepage's appreciation. This led him to admire the works of its most widely different artists, and to take pleasure both in the classic grace of Henner's nymphs and in the crude mastery of Manet's *Bon Bock*. For the last-named artist he had the keenest admiration, and always declared that a picture by Manet of a woman in

white, sitting on a green seat, had been the first really life-like bit of painting which he had seen in Paris. He revered Millet as a master who had dared to be true to his own convictions and to paint peasant life as he had actually seen and known it. But of all modern pictures none moved him as deeply as Courbet's famous *Enterrement à Ornans*. In his eyes, the group of weeping women seemed to surpass anything of the kind which had as yet been attempted. "There you have absolute truth," he exclaimed one day. "The truth of grief, a truth which we all of us feel. 'The emotion which such a sight arouses is enough to make one abjure academic art for ever. There is nothing really lasting, something that will endure, but the sincere expression of the actual conditions of life.'"

V

The theories which Bastien-Lepage poured out so freely in conversation with his friends, and upon which, at times, he insisted with a vehemence that provoked opposition, soon found expression in his works. His success at the Salon of 1874 brought him fresh orders. M. Hayem, a wealthy connoisseur, whose notice had been attracted by the picture of his grandfather, employed him to paint his portrait. This was exhibited in the Salon of 1874, together with another work of far greater interest, his picture of *La Communiant*e. This portrait of the little peasant-girl robed in white for her first communion, was another step in the same direction as *Mon Grandpère*, another resolute attempt on Bastien-Lepage's part to reproduce the life of the present, and the faces of the people about him. Certainly here nothing is idealised. The little dark-eyed maid is seated erect in her chair, wearing a frock of thick white muslin and a stiff white veil, and a wreath of flowers upon her black hair. She holds her missal before her, and her rough hands are stuffed into white gloves, cracked at the seams, in her efforts to pull them on. Yet every line of her figure, every detail in her dress, the conscious primness of her quaint little person, the very awkwardness with which she wears her new clothes, helps us to realise the importance and

solemnity of the occasion. The look of innocent pride and wonder upon the child's face, the seriousness of her brown eyes, make us feel that for her at least this is a day that can never be forgotten. But what surprised the critics who had admired Bastien-Lepage's former work, was the delicacy and precision with which this little picture was painted. The sentiment was altogether modern, but the careful execution and minute finish recalled the works of the old Dutch and Flemish masters. This style, so utterly unlike that broader brushwork of his former portraits, marked a new departure in his art. *La Communiant*e was, in fact, the precursor of that long series of small portraits, all marked by the same uncompromising sincerity and exquisite finish which were to prove one of Bastien-Lepage's most enduring titles to fame.

But for the moment, other schemes absorbed his thoughts. That summer he entered the lists to compete for the Prix de Rome. The subject for the year was the Annunciation of the Nativity of Christ by an Angel to the Shepherds of Bethlehem. Here was an opportunity for carrying out one of his favourite theories, and representing an historical scene exactly as it might have happened at the present time, and as in all probability it did actually happen. In this respect the theory of this independent young French artist agreed with the principles, openly professed by the English Pre-Raphaelites, some thirty years before. They too, in the words of their champion Mr. Ruskin, had tried honestly "to represent things as they are or were or may be, instead of, according to the practice of their instructors and the wishes of their public, things as they are *not*, never were and never can be : this effort being founded deeply on a conviction that it is at first better, and finally more pleasing, for human minds to contemplate things as they are, than as they are not." This conviction it was which prompted young Rossetti to paint the youthful Virgin waking out of her sleep on her little white bed by the sudden vision of the Angel-messenger, and Holman Hunt to spend months at Jerusalem working at his *The Scapegoat*, and *The Shadow of Death*. The picture which Bastien-Lepage sent to the Palais des Beaux Arts that summer time was not unworthy of a place by the side of these great and serious works. His *Annunciation to the Shepherds* has never received the attention which it deserved, but whatever its defects of composition or technique may be, it was

undoubtedly a remarkable performance for an artist of six-and-twenty. His treatment of the subject, as might be expected, was absolutely unconventional. Yet there is a dignity and beauty in his rendering of the Gospel story, which lifts the actual event above the realm of the commonplace, and glorifies it with a touch of mystic poetry. In the darkening twilight, we see the group of brown-skinned peasants resting on the ground, by the fire which they have kindled on the open hillside. The ruddy glow of the firelight falls on their bewildered faces, as they wake out of sleep, startled by the angelic vision.

One gray-headed man, sinking on his knees, adores the heavenly messenger ; another younger and more eager, bends forward with parted lips and outstretched arms as if seeking to know the meaning of this sudden apparition ; while a third is seen crouching in the background, apparently still overcome with drowsiness. Close by them on the dusky hillside the angel stands, a gracious figure in robes of white and a golden girdle. His face is fair and youthful, his form is human, only the shining aureole round his brow is there to remind us of his celestial birth. The words of the divine message are upon his lips, "Fear not, for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord," and as he speaks he points to the far horizon where the light is breaking over the distant roofs of Bethlehem.

When the doors of the Palais des Beaux Arts were opened on that July morning and the crowd rushed in, eager for the first sight of the ten competing works, Bastien-Lepage's picture was hailed with a burst of applause. All day long people pressed round the place where it hung, and there was a general impression that he had won the prize. Unfortunately the jury with whom the decision rested, thought differently. Bastien-Lepage's *Annunciation* only received the second prize, and the Prix de Rome was awarded to Comerre, an older and more conventional artist. But that evening the art students who met at Mademoiselle Anna's well-known restaurant in the Quartier Latin crowned the picture of Bastien-Lepage which hung there with laurel wreaths in honour of the painter who was felt to be the true hero of the hour. The next morning a palm-branch was found fixed in the frame of his *Annunciation* by the other competitors and in silent acknowledgment of their rival's supremacy. And at the same time a laurel bough

was placed there, by the hand, it is said, of Madame Sarah Bernhardt.

Bastien-Lepage felt the disappointment keenly, but he soon recovered his equanimity and resolved to try his fate once more in the following year, less for his own satisfaction than to gratify the parents, who had made so many sacrifices for his sake.

But the subject for 1876, "Priam at the feet of Achilles," was less congenial to his taste, and he once more failed to win the prize. Yet the vigour and originality of the picture which he produced impressed the critics profoundly, and in the opinion of more than one of the best judges, deserved the prize. This time, however, the painter himself was comparatively indifferent as to the result. Other dreams were filling his brain, and with a sigh of relief he shook off the trammels of the schools and felt himself once more a free man. As a matter of fact, his failure on this occasion was the best thing that could have happened to him. There are painters for whom the sight of Italy is a necessity. Claude and Corot both found inspiration in the luminous skies and broad horizons of the Campagna. Bastien-Lepage's genius was cast in a different mould. Like Millet and Rousseau, his work lay nearer home, and he needed no other theme than the landscapes and the peasants of his native France. For him the woods of Réville and the meadows along the Tinte were more eloquent than the enchanted regions of classic story. Had he won the Prix de Rome and gone to study at the Villa Medici, his impressionable nature might easily have been diverted from its natural aims, and it might have been long before he found his true vocation. As it was, he went back to Damvillers that summer to work out the cherished dream of his youth and become the painter of peasant life in La Meuse.

PART II

“Paint these
Just as they are, careless what comes of it,
God’s works—paint any one, and count it crime
To let a truth slip.”—ROBERT BROWNING.

Bastien-Lepage as a peasant-painter—Tour in Argonne—“L’Absent”—“Les Foins”—Portraits of his parents and brother—of Sarah Bernhardt—Albert Wolff—Madame Drouet—the Prince of Wales—Visits to London—“Jeanne d’Arc”—“Saison d’Octobre”—Success of “Le Mendiant” and of “Père Jacques”—Plans new pictures—“L’Amour au Village”—Illness—Visit to Algiers—Marie Baskirtseff—Death—Exhibition of his works in 1885—General characteristics of his art.

I

FOR some time past, the rustic life of his country home had been absorbing Bastien-Lepage’s attention. When he went back to Damvillers, after his first successes in Paris, the old scenes seemed to him full of new and deeper meanings. Here he felt was his true vocation. These fields and orchards in all the varying aspects of the changing seasons, these peasants with their rough hands and coarse clothes, were more interesting and attractive to him than all the tales of “old, unhappy, far-off things,” which he had been asked to paint in the schools. Born and bred among the peasants of La Meuse, he was intimately acquainted with their ways and thoughts. Every detail of their lives was familiar to him. Their joys and sorrows, their fears and hopes, their times of labour, their hours of rest, he could tell them all by heart. He knew their characters and tempers, their slowness of speech and their awkward manners. And he knew, too, how deep down underneath the homely features and the stammering tongues,

lay hidden a poetry and a pathos of which the world never dreams. The strong attachment to the soil which brings the peasant who left home as a boy back to end his days in his native village, the pride of the labourer when he becomes the owner of a few acres, the lifelong devotion of one man to one woman, mutely expressed in the downcast eyes of the awkward lad and enduring through years of good and evil—these things were all well known to him. And he was determined to make others understand them too. The critics might sneer at his choice of subjects and call his types vulgar if they chose, they might have said the same of many an old master.

“Most of Holbein’s heads,” he said one day to his friend Theuriet, “are not beautiful in the plastic sense of the word, but none the less they are singularly interesting. For, underneath their very ugliness and vulgarity, we find the thought and feeling that glorifies everything. The peasant, he too has his own fashion of being sad or joyous, of feeling and of thinking. It is that particular fashion which we must try and discover. When you have found out and represented *that*, it matters little if your personages have irregular features, clumsy manners and coarse hands. They cannot fail to be beautiful because they will be living and thinking beings. The patient, conscientious study of nature—that is the only thing worth having!” If only he could go deep enough down into the life of these simple folk, lay bare the thoughts of their hearts, and show the world that they were thinking and feeling men and women, moved by the same passions, and stirred by the same emotions as other human beings, he knew that his pictures must become interesting. For this would be true poetry and great art, and could not fail in its appeal to humanity in every age. But to make others feel what he felt, he must reproduce the actual scene, the light and colour of the landscape, the very atmosphere in which his people moved. He must make others see the flowers in the long grass, and the shadows on the sloping hillside, feel the burning heat of the sun drying the hay and ripening the corn, realise for themselves, in fact, some of those thousand different sensations of which he himself was hourly conscious. And to do this would demand years of patient and continual labour, the concentration of his whole faculties upon the work before him.

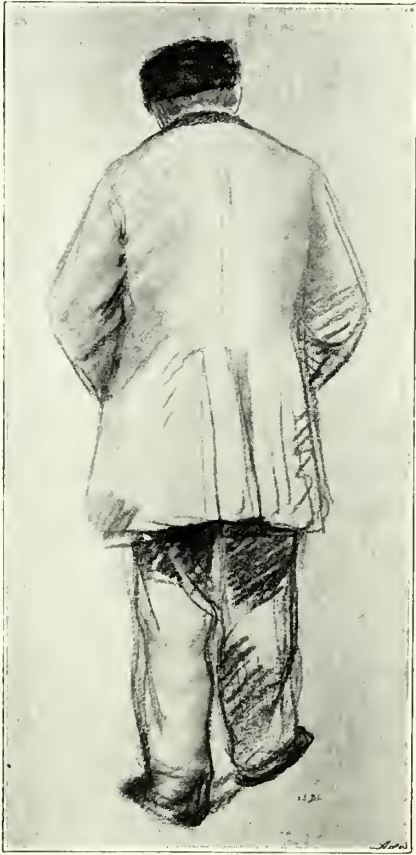
This then was the task to which the young painter brought his powers

of hand and brain, matured as they had been by his Paris training. He made himself an atelier in a garret of his father's house in the Grande Place at Damvillers, but most of his painting was done out of doors, in the garden or the meadows. He wandered up and down the fields and lanes, taking note of all he saw, and learning some fresh lesson at every step. Whatever the time of year might be, he was never idle. Each season in turn supplied him with new subjects for pen or pencil. In the spring he sketched the trees bursting into leaf, the gardens with their opening flowers and their young plants shooting out of the ground, the apple orchards laden with their wealth of rosy blossom. When the summer came he painted the tall seeds and grasses in the meadows, the haymakers and the reapers at their work. In autumn there was the vintage and the potato-gathering, in winter the hoar frost and the snow. Endless was the variety of subjects with which he filled his sketch-books, during the quiet months which he spent at Damvillers. The mowers sharpening their scythes under the hedgerow, in the half-mown meadow, the shepherd taking shelter under a spreading beech tree from the blazing heat of the noonday sun, the vine-dresser digging the ground between the rows of vines, all find a place in these pages. On one sheet we see a *pêcheur de grenouilles* wading up to his knees in the marshy swamp on the edge of the rush-grown pond, on another we see a fire which has broken out at midnight in the village, and has brought the whole population out into the street. He shows us the peasant going to visit his field in his leisure hours on Sunday, and paints the village street at the evening hour when the tired labourer wends his way slowly home and the lights are twinkling in the window of the house where the good wife is busy preparing her husband's supper. Sometimes he sketches the women at work in the kitchen, or washing their clothes in the river. Sometimes he paints them kneeling devoutly at their prayers, or else some fleeting ray of sunlight on the roofs, some chance reflection in a clear pool of water has caught his eye, and he stops to jot down the colours of the bright clouds chasing each other across the sky at early dawn or the mysterious effect of the evening shades descending over wood and field. In one study we see a mass of rolling white clouds, floating across a deep blue summer sky, with a plough standing in the foreground and a wide stretch of brown arable land beyond. In another, the graceful boughs

of a slender ash tree are clearly defined against the midnight sky, under a long trail of luminous cloud. But whether he gives us sunsets or moonlight effects, studies of sky or landscape, the forms of hill and cloud, and the character of trees and plants are alike indicated with the same close observation.

The simplest incidents often supplied him with subjects. A beggar standing at the hall door, a little peasant-girl watching her cow graze by the side of the road, a man crossing the meadow and leaving the track of his footsteps in the long grass, a child crying or a ragged boy at play—these are some of the impressions which he records with a few strokes of his pen, or a hasty dash of colour. Sometimes he sketches a wounded stag which has come to die on the edge of a reedy pool in the heart of the autumn woods, sometimes a boar-hunt in the forest, sometimes merely a bunch of spring-flowers or a dead robin. But in the summer of 1876, Bastien-Lepage's thoughts were already occupied with his picture of *Les Foins*, and many were the studies which he made of haymakers either at work or else resting from their labours in the noonday heat. Often the same woman appears in half-a-dozen different attitudes, lying in the grass or leaning upon her rake, looking towards us or turning her back on us. One of his best-known drawings which has often been reproduced under the name *La Faneuse*, is that of a peasant-girl walking home through the meadows with her rake on her shoulder, and turning round to look at the other haymakers at work and at the loaded waggons under the poplar-trees by the river. Her face is turned away, we only see the back of her head and the tresses of hair loosely coiled together, but the whole figure is admirably expressive. In this finely-grown, strongly built young woman, with her thick wrists and ankles and her short homespun skirts, we have a true type of the Meuse peasant, sturdy of frame and stolid in nature, accustomed to hard labour from her youth, but not without a certain dignity and consciousness of honest independence in her bearing. In these early days, Bastien-Lepage painted the portraits of his father and mother, which were exhibited in the Salon of 1877. Both of his parents took the greatest pride in his work, and were never tired of telling their friends that Jules' name was in all the Paris papers, although the boy himself declared that this meant very little and was not worth talking about. His father liked to watch him at his painting, and generally had

some criticism to offer. Even the old grandfather had his opinion to give, and would leave his work and pause before Jules' easel for a few minutes to see how the boy was getting on, and then go back to his flower-beds. The freedom of this country life exactly suited the painter. Often, on his return from visits to Paris, he would ramble about the



Sketch of the Artist's Grandfather.

fields and woods for whole days with his hands in his pockets, and drinking in the fresh air, the country sights and sounds. On winter days he would take long shooting expeditions accompanied by his favourite dogs, and hunt the deer in the woods of Réville, or stroll along the river in search of wild duck till nightfall. Then he would set to work and paint for days together with the whole energy of his being.

In the evening the family met round the parlour table. Jules and his brother Emile were busy with their pencils, while their father read the papers, their mother sewed and the favourite cat dozed on the knee of the old grandfather. Then Bastien-Lepage would put down ideas which had struck him in the course of the day, or divert himself and his companions by making careful studies of a copper candlestick or a felt hat, or any other

object at hand. Often too, he would draw caricatures of his brother, representing him in a dozen different attitudes, each more comical than the last. Or else, like Leonardo before him he would cover whole sheets of paper with grotesque heads, talking and laughing all the while. Many were the pen-and-ink sketches which he made of this

happy family party, sitting round the table with the lamp in the centre ; many the clever portraits which he took of his old grandfather, reading



The Artist's Grandfather.

the newspaper in his arm-chair, or resting his elbows on the table, or else lying fast asleep on his couch.

The friends who came from Paris, André Theuriet or Charles Baude the engraver, and saw Bastien-Lepage in his home used to say that there were two different persons in him, the man of Paris and the man of Damvillers. The one they describe as grave and silent, impatient of interruption and occasionally hasty in word and manner. The other, they said, was gentle and charming, full of kindly forethought for his friends and parents, and brimming over with fun and laughter. They saw him at home the life and soul of the family circle, they went with him on his country walks and shared his delight in the beauty of trees and flowers. They tell us with what genuine pleasure he would hunt for the first spring violets or delicate wood anemones, or listen to the carol of the March blackbird. Often he would stop to pick the chicory or hemlock plant, the field daisies, and blue cornflowers, which he loved to set in the foreground of his pictures, or point out the decorative forms of some bud or leaf. "Ah ! how beautiful !" he exclaimed, one spring day, when he had found a plant of the wild Christmas rose growing in the woods. "How I should like to make a careful study of these finely-cut dark green and brown leaves, with their green stem and cluster of pale flowers tinted with rose pink. What exquisite shapes, and what a variety of tender shades ! That is what they ought to give the children of our drawing-classes to copy, instead of that eternal and detestable Diana of Gabii !"

II

In the autumn of 1876, M. Theuriet paid a visit to Bastien-Lepage at Damvillers, and took a walking-tour with his two brothers in the picturesque district of Argonne. Together they visited the ancient glass-works of les Islettes, founded by a guild of artists as far back as the fifteenth century, and explored the forest of Beaulieu. They saw the street of Varennes where the ill-fated Louis XVI. and his family were stopped in their memorable flight, and they penetrated through narrow valleys and rocky gorges to the ruined Abbey of La Chalade. Finally they reached the hermitage of Saint Rouin, the Irish Apostle

who had evangelised the district of Argonne in the seventh century and lies buried in this secluded spot in the heart of the forest.

Here they witnessed a pilgrimage, and, much to their amusement, narrowly escaped being taken up as Prussian spies. The German invasion had made a deep impression on the simple folk of the district, and the presence of these strangers, who quoted German phrases, and discussed Goethe, had already aroused suspicion. In one village where Bastien-Lepage took out his paint-box and brushes, an old woman had asked him in a voice of terror if he was going to bring the Prussians back again. But he had only treated the notion as a good joke and had never dreamt of any serious trouble on this score. Now, the sight of the assembled crowds at the open-air mass in the meadow at Saint Rouin moved him to make another sketch. An altar bearing a silver cross and candles and decorated with green boughs and flowers had been raised on the grass under the forest-trees, and a bishop in purple robes "exactly like a magnificent violet iris" was officiating, attended by scarlet acolytes. The effect of all this rich colouring and the play of sunlight and shadow on the picturesque groups of pilgrims kneeling or standing on the grass with their banners charmed the painter's eyes, and as soon as sermon and mass were over, he set to work to reproduce the scene on canvas. But when the procession of priests and choristers had left the spot and the pilgrims were dispersed, a crowd collected round the artist and malignant whispers were heard among the country people. A report had already got about that these strangers were Prussian spies, who were making plans of the country, and the village authorities were prepared to take active measures. Presently a forester stepped forward, and in the name of the law, demanded the gentlemen to produce their papers. An animated discussion followed, during which Bastien-Lepage alone kept his presence of mind and continued his drawing. But the friends, unable to produce anything but their cards, were on the point of being arrested as suspicious characters, when fortunately one of the party was recognized by an old acquaintance, who hailed them as *compatriotes*. So the adventure ended happily and Bastien-Lepage was allowed to carry off his sketch in triumph, much to the disappointment of the inhabitants, who thought they had made an important capture that would redound greatly to the honour of their village.

All through this expedition, Bastien-Lepage was in the highest spirits. In spite of the heavy rain which repeatedly interrupted his work, he made seven or eight drawings, and beguiled the long evenings spent at village inns by singing popular songs at the top of his voice. And he talked freely with his friends of his hopes and plans for the future. He intended to paint a great series of pictures, illustrating the whole cycle of peasant-life. Sowing and reaping, ploughing and digging, haytime and harvest, the vintage and the fruit-gathering, were each to form part of the scheme. Love and marriage, birth and death were to have their place in the story. Together with Theuriet he would publish a series of twelve compositions entitled *Les Mois Rustiques*. His friend should write the letter-press and he would adorn the pages with drawings of peasant-life and labour, and with the flowers and fruits of the different seasons. And then he would carry out his favourite dream and paint a Jeanne d'Arc, of his own "coin de terre," as well as another great picture, which should have for its subject, *La Mise au Tombeau* and represent the Maries weeping over the body of Christ. He had already made several preparatory sketches for this work, including a water-colour study of the dead Christ, but before he began the picture was anxious to see the celebrated *Entombment* at Saint Mihiel, the masterpiece of Ligier Richier, a Lorraine sculptor of the sixteenth century. So he left his friends on their return journey to visit the church containing this marble group, which he described in a letter to his friend Charles Baude as the most touching work of sculpture that he had ever seen. "France," he adds, "ought to be prouder and less ignorant of this great Lorraine artist."

Meanwhile M. Theuriet had made the walk through the Argonne the subject of an article called "La Chanson du Jardinier," and sent a copy of the magazine in which it appeared, to Damvillers. "I must tell you" wrote Bastien-Lepage in return, "how much pleasure your article gave my parents and congratulate you on the portraits you have drawn of them. When the *Revue* arrived, we did not *read* the book, but tore it out of each other's hands and devoured it, over one another's shoulders. I will do my best, I assure you, to deserve the name of the Primitif! Bravo! for the songs! for the sunny page of the Bishop's sermon!—that great violet iris—how exactly you describe the scene!

But what more can I say, only that you have made me live the whole journey over again !”

M. Theuriet’s article was afterwards republished in his volume of *Sous Bois*, and one of Bastien-Lepage’s best-known drawings was destined to adorn the title-page. Eventually the book appeared without illustrations, but the drawing, which was evidently a recollection of the walking tour in Argonne, has been often reproduced, sometimes by the name *L’Absent*, sometimes simply described as *L’Auberge*. The scene represented is the interior of a village inn. In the background a group of men seated at table are engaged in talking, drinking, smoking and playing cards ; while in the foreground we see a young woman, probably the servant of the inn, who has set down her basket on the floor and retreated to a window overlooking the street, where she sits, leaning her head against the frame and watching for the form of her absent friend. There is no particular charm about her, she is simply a peasant girl in a coarse stuff gown and long apron. The whole beauty of the picture lies in her intent face, in the fixed yearning of her eyes, and the expectant air of her whole form, as she listens for the footstep which tarries still. The face of that poor peasant girl is in its way as much a triumph of expression as that of Jeanne d’Arc herself, and is a sufficient answer to the critics who say that Bastien-Lepage was a painter devoid alike of poetry and of feeling.

But those joyous autumn days were to have a melancholy ending. When the painter wrote again to his friend, it was in a sadder strain. His father had died suddenly of congestion of the lungs. It was the first break in the happy family circle, and Jules felt the blow keenly.

“We were too young to lose so good a friend, and for all my courage, the blank, the awful blank fills me at times with a sense of despair.” “Happily his memory is left us,” he wrote to another friend, M. Victor Klotz, “and what a memory it is ! the purest and best that there could be. He was goodness and unselfishness personified, and he loved us so well ! But what can we do ? Nothing but try to fill up the gap with a great deal of love for those who remain and who care for us, and keep up the remembrance of him we have lost, as well as work hard to drive away the one thought that is always present.”

Work indeed proved his one consolation, and the next year saw the

production of some of his most important works. He spent the winter months in Paris, engaged on a full-length portrait of Madame Lebègue, in a splendid court costume of Tudor date, and on another of his friend Theuriet. He was now settled in the Impasse du Maine, with his brother Emile, who was studying architecture, as his companion. Here he had a large atelier looking out on a garden with a single apricot tree which he liked, for the sake of the white blossoms which reminded him of Damvillers. The walls were hung with his own sketches and some Japanese curtains, and an old divan and a few stools were the only furniture. Here, M. Theuriet tells us, he used to appear every morning at eight o'clock, to find the painter but half awake, and after smoking a cigarette together Bastien-Lepage would set to work with fiery speed. Now and then he would stop and leave his seat and contemplate his friend's face in silence for several minutes without saying a word and then return to work with renewed vigour. The rapidity and boldness of touch with which he worked was marvellous. He always prepared the exact tone of his colour on his palette, and never put it on the canvas until he was certain of the effect that it would produce. In this way his painting won that peculiar crispness and freshness which has been often admired. He was also very particular about keeping his palette clean and tidy, declaring that he could not work unless his white was in the middle, between the blues and greens on one side and the reds and browns and yellows on the other. He generally managed to get the general effect of the picture at the first sitting, but after that he would work at it again and again for weeks together, always finding that something more was wanted to make it perfect, and never quite satisfied with the result.

The whole of that summer was devoted to his large open-air picture of *Les Foins*, and his letters to M. Theuriet give some interesting details respecting its progress.

In July he writes: "My picture, as yet, is not fully sketched out. But I may tell you that I am going to indulge in a revel of pearly tints; half-dried hay and flowering grasses seen together in the sunshine, and producing the effect of some pale yellow tissue embroidered with silver threads. A few clumps of trees along the banks of the brook and in the meadow will stand out like dark spots and give the whole a Japanese

effect. . . ." A month later he returns to the subject with fresh interest :

August 15, "Your verses are just the sort of picture that I should like to paint. You make one feel the scent of the hay and the heat of the meadow. . . . If only my hay smells as good as yours does, I shall be content. . . . My young peasant woman is sitting on the grass. Her arms are drooping, her face is red and hot, her fixed eyes have a vacant look. Her whole attitude is tired and worn out. She will, I think, give the idea of a true peasant. Behind, her companion is lying flat on his back, sleeping with his fists closed; and in the full sunshine of the meadow beyond, the peasants are going back to work again. At first, I had a great trouble in the composition of my picture, being anxious to preserve the actual aspect of a corner of nature. There is nothing of a conventional arrangement here, no willow falling over the heads of the personages to frame in the scene. Nothing of all that. My personages stand out against the half-dried hay. A small tree grows in the corner of the picture, to show that other trees are near, and that our peasants have come here to rest in the shade. The whole tone of the picture will be a very pale gray-green. . . ."

And in September he tells Theuriet that the country people say his figures are alive, a verdict which gratified him more than all the praises of the Paris world. In the following spring, *Les Foins* appeared at the Salon, and caused a great sensation there. The extraordinary force of the painting, the absolute reality of the two figures, the tired, panting woman, and the man sleeping with his hat over his eyes, and the way in which they stand out against the pale background, above all the wonderful effect of light and air in the picture, made an immense impression at the time. "I came into the room, without knowing what I should see," wrote Marie Bashkirtseff in her journal, "and stopped short before *Les Foins* as you would stop before a window which has been suddenly opened on the country." Several critics, as might be expected, accused the artist of heresy, and as he expected, reproached him with the coarseness and vulgarity of his types. But the younger men rallied round Bastien-Lepage, and hailed him with enthusiasm as the master of a new school and the painter of open-air life.

III

An artist who makes truth his first object and has a keen and penetrating faculty of observation is likely to excel in portraiture ; and so we find that Bastien-Lepage was no mere professional manufacturer of portraits, but a portrait painter of the very highest order. From the beginning of his career in Paris, his portraits had been popular among his brother-artists and every year increased his reputation in this direction. Commissions reached him from all sides. Editors and journalists, ministers of state and merchants, actors and beauties, came to him in turn and sat to him for their portraits.

In the Salon of 1875, his portrait of the wealthy banker M. Simon Hayem, dressed in clothes of the latest Paris cut and fashion, was recognized as a living type of the rich merchant and thorough man of the world, who combined refined tastes with practical business qualities. That of M. Wallon, exhibited in the Salon of 1876, was a no less exact admirable likeness of this former Minister of Public Instruction, with his timid and careworn expression, although it was attacked for political purposes by his opponents. At the same time Bastien-Lepage painted several portraits of ladies, which were exhibited at the Cercle Volney. That of Madame Godillot attracted attention by the skilful manner in which the bright carnations of a fair complexion were relieved by the black velvet of her gown, while the refined charm of Madame Victor Klotz's dark eyes were heightened by the simplicity of her white tulle folds and black robe. The portrait of Madame Lebègue, here reproduced, is interesting as the only full-length life-sized portrait ever painted by the artist. The fantastic character of the lady's costume, the blue velvet train and white satin skirt excited the scorn of the critics, who reproached the painter with this theatrical effect and called him a servile-copyist of old pictures. At the same time they were forced to acknowledge the marvellous skill with which he had treated the rich details of old brocade and lace in Madame Lebègue's dress and the



Portrait of Madame Lebègue.

tapestry of the background. If any further proof of the independent and versatile nature of Bastien-Lepage's talent were needed, his detractors had only to turn to the double portrait of his father and mother in one frame, which hung in the same Salon. Here was a masterpiece which it was impossible to overlook and which imposed silence on the most cavilling tongues. The artist had represented his parents sitting on a low bench in the garden at Damvillers, in their every-day country dress, just as he had done in his grandfather's portrait. And as before, the effect he has chosen is one of plain daylight, without help from striking illumination of any kind. The whole charm of the pictures lies in the ease and simplicity of their treatment, in the affectionate feeling with which they are painted. In each case the individual character is admirably brought out. We see at a glance the frank manliness and kindness of the father, the goodness and tenderness of the mother. In the opinion of artists Madame Bastien-Lepage's portrait is considered the painter's greatest technical triumph, because the structure and modelling of the face are so perfect. The features are plain and irregular, and there has evidently not been the faintest attempt at flattery on the part of the artist, but at the same time there is a look of lively intelligence and sweetness which makes the portrait far more profoundly charming than many a younger and prettier face. This characteristic picture is at once a touching tribute of filial affection and a worthy memorial of the devoted woman whom her son's friends describe as the best possible mother for an artist, skilled in all that makes the home, and yet quick to follow his moods and fancies, always thinking of others and only forgetful of herself.

These earlier portraits of Bastien-Lepage were all on a large scale, generally about the size of life, and treated with a certain breadth of manner. But about this time he adopted an entirely different style, and began to paint a series of small portraits, varying from twenty to fifty inches in height and from twenty to forty in breadth. These little portraits were painted in the same style as his old picture *La Communiquante*, and were marked by the same delicate brushwork and high degree of finish. It is wonderful to see how in a few square inches of canvas, the painter contrives to give a vivid impression of his sitter's personality, and of the atmosphere in which he lives. The whole of the man's outer

and inner self, his habits and surroundings, his temper, character and condition of life are all brought before us at the same moment. "The man himself—what he was—not more, but to all conceivable proof of

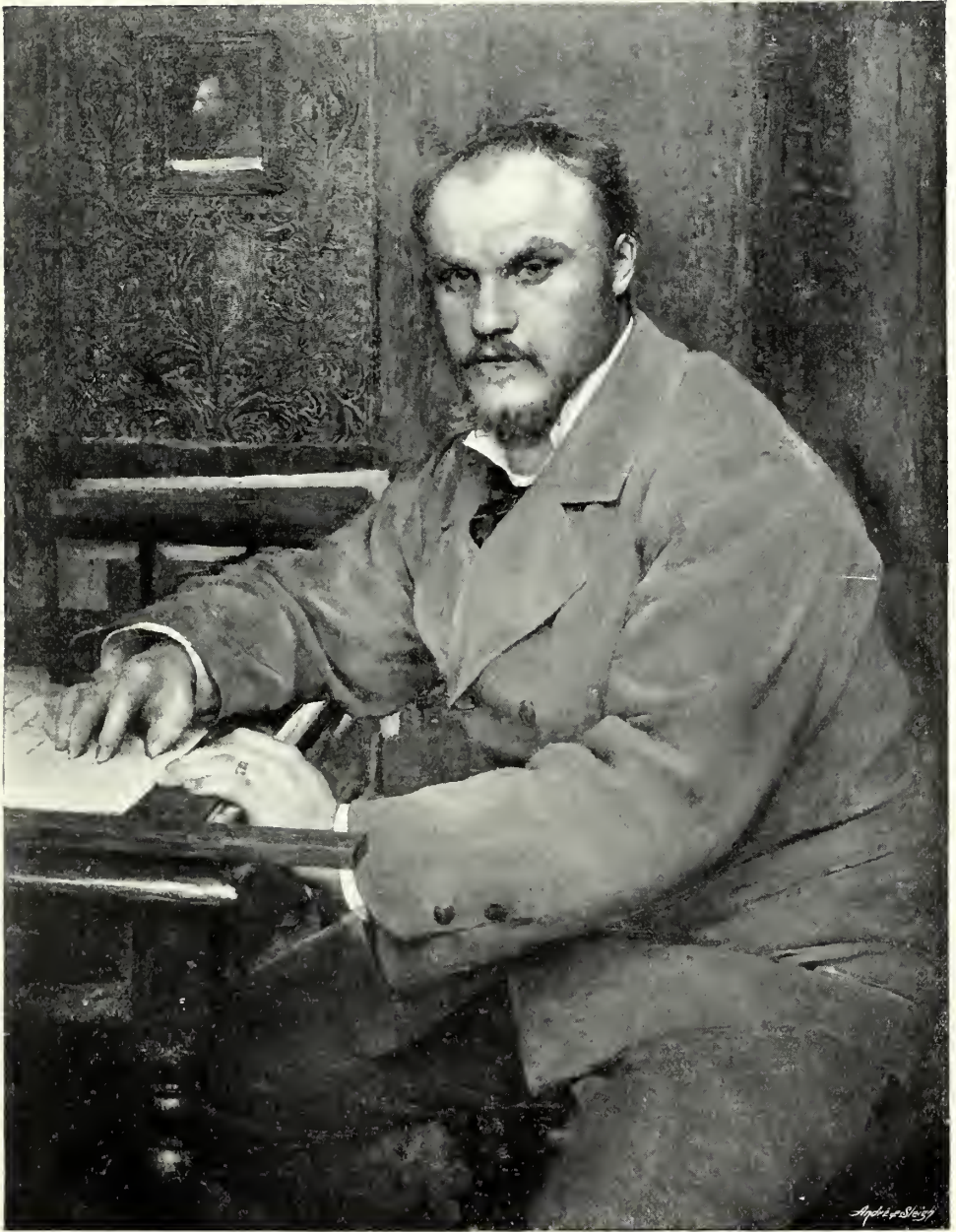


The Artist's Mother.

right, in all aspect of life or thought, not less. So far as it reaches, it contains the absolute facts of colour, form and character, rendered with an unaccusable faithfulness."

Take for instance, one of these little portraits, which does not depend for interest, as others may, on the fame of the subject, that of his brother, the architect. M. Emile Bastien-Lepage, a small, fair-haired man, with the same square forehead as the painter, is seated in his ordinary gray morning suit at the table, resting his hands on some architectural plans which are spread out before him. Both hands and face are studied with the most careful attention, and the strong character and thoughtful expression of the countenance are admirably rendered. The colouring is very quiet throughout. There is a yellow curtain at the back of the head, and a small profile portrait of the artist's father hangs on the stamped leather of the wall behind. The light, as usual in the painter's works, is ordinary daylight, and the same high degree of finish is perceptible in every part of the picture. Yet in sober and tranquil accomplishment this little portrait can hardly be surpassed.

Equally fine in its way is the portrait of M. Albert Wolff, the well-known journalist, sitting in the luxurious ease of his study, wearing red slippers on his feet and holding a cigarette in his hand, with a bronze of Barye at his side and a number of *Figaro* lying on the table before him. In M. Theuriet's thoughtful countenance and gray eyes we realise the imaginative power and poetic dreams of the thinker and author. In M. Andrieux's keen face and alert eye as he bends to listen to a report which is being read to him, we recognise the former prefect of police. Or, to take an instance of his power in another direction, there is the portrait which Bastien-Lepage painted in Victor Hugo's house, of the poet's faithful friend, Madame Juliette Drouet, and which has been described with good reason as "a miracle of likeness, of feeling, and of execution." At that time she was already slowly dying of cancer, and the traces of suffering are plainly seen in her drooping form, in the deep lines of the brow and the pallor of the thin cheek, but the painter has caught and rendered the spiritual charm which lingered on her countenance to the end. This pathetic little picture was painted by Bastien-Lepage during the last years of his own life, when he himself was smitten by the same terrible disease, and the friends who watched the progress of the portrait, often wondered which of the two would be the first to go.



M. Emile Bastien-Lepage.

But the most famous and the most actually beautiful of all Bastien-Lepage's portraits is that of Madame Sarah Bernhardt. In



Madame Drouot.

its vivid sense of life and power, this portrait forms a strange contrast to that of Victor Hugo's white-haired friend. The great actress is painted in profile, sitting up in an erect attitude and looking down

apparently rapt in thought, at a small statue of Orpheus which she holds in her hand. The creamy tones of her brocades, the snowy whiteness of the fur rug at her side and the bright locks of her wavy hair are all painted with rare delicacy. Both as a study of colour and of expression, this picture is equally remarkable. In some strange way the artist has been able to lay hold of the dreamy spell that floats about the enchantress. We see the magic of the down-dropped eye and hear the vibrations of that voice which has thrilled us all with its passion and its power.

It is interesting to compare this well-known portrait of Sarah Bernhardt with another picture which is slighter indeed, but just as exquisite in treatment. It is that of a lady sleeping on her bed. Only the face and one hand are visible. But the expression of the slumbering face and the varied tints of white are beautifully given, while the surrounding objects—pillow, curtains, and counterpane—are all very slightly indicated and kept in a subdued light. This harmony in white is another example of the variety of styles in which this artist worked and of the mastery which he attained in each of them. Like Rembrandt and other artists who have worked in different styles, Bastien-Lepage expressed himself most decidedly in the style adopted for the time being, as if it had been the only one he knew or could employ. Among the works in his brother's possession, there is a study of a naked man about the size of life seated on the ground, with his knees raised and his head and one hand resting upon them. This is interesting as a specimen of strong and rough brush-work, as opposite as possible to the workmanship of the portraits we have been considering. A critic who saw this study without knowing the artist of the work would naturally conclude that he was a painter of considerable manual power but altogether wanting in refinement. "The fact is," he said to an English friend who questioned him closely about this variety of style that was so curious a feature in his work, "I have no fixed rules and no particular method. I paint things just as I see them, sometimes in one fashion, sometimes in another, and afterwards I hear people say that my pictures are like Rembrandt or like Clouet."

Whatever discussion Bastien-Lepage's works provoked during his

lifetime, his portraits received the most unqualified praise. They were the wonder of all the critics, the despair of all the artists. "C'est la vie même! c'est l'âme," wrote Marie Bashkirtseff. "Et c'est d'une facture qu'on ne peut comparer à rien, car c'est la nature même. On est insensé de peindre après cela." We have only mentioned two or three of the most remarkable among the many portraits which he painted during his short career. He had told M. de Fourcaud that once he had finished his series of rustic pictures he meant to turn his attention to Parisian life and to paint the people he knew and saw there. Had he lived long enough to carry out this intention we might have had many more portraits of distinguished contemporaries from his hand. It is impossible not to feel what a priceless possession a gallery of such portraits would have been for the future historian of the nineteenth century. But this was not to be, and Bastien-Lepage's portraits of Albert Wolff, of Sarah Bernhardt, and of Madame Drouet, remain to show us what he might have done in this direction had he been allowed a longer span of life.

IV

In the spring of 1879, another great picture came from Damvillers. This was the well-known *Potato Gatherers*, or *Saison d'Octobre*, as it is sometimes called. The exact shape and size of this canvas are the same as *Les Foins*, almost square, and rather wider than it is high, the proportions being 1 meter 81 inches in height and 1 meter 99 inches in width. The scene is a potato-field, where two women are at work. The principal figure, a woman with a fine head and serious face, is stooping down to empty her basket into a sack on the ground, while her companion, a rosy-cheeked, smiling, peasant-girl of a common type, is kneeling down gathering potatoes at her side. Behind them is the broad plain with its patches of arable and grass land and a few leafless trees swayed to and fro by the wind, reminding us of the coming winter. There is no sunshine in the picture, but the rich browns and russet and



J. Bastien-Lepage Del.

Walter L. Goltz. Sc.

Sarah Bernhardt.

greens of the soil under the gray sky, the clods of earth and scanty herbage and wild flowers of the foreground are all exactly rendered, and help to give the same impression of the lonely countryside on a still October day. The picture is in some ways the most complete that



The Potato Gatherers.

Bastien-Lepage ever painted. There is the same sense of light and air as in *Les Foins*, the same vigorous drawing and forcible realisation of life and character in the figures. But the harmony of colour is more perfect and the composition is more impressive, while the action and expression

of the stooping woman is finer than anything of the kind in his peasant-pictures.

This time the artist's success was complete. The voices of envious detractors were silenced and Bastien-Lepage was recognised among the foremost of living painters. His *Portrait of Madame Sarah Bernhardt* was exhibited at the same time, and the painter's double achievement in these separate branches of his art commanded general admiration.

"Bastien-Lepage," wrote the poet Théodore de Banville, "is the king of this year's Salon."

Now that success had at length come to him, his first thought was of his parents. His father indeed was dead, but his mother and grandfather remained. They had shared his struggles and trials and must now share in his prosperity. So he brought both of them to Paris and showed them the sights of the city. He took his mother to the Magasin du Louvre and told her to choose a new gown for herself. In vain she protested that these silks and satins were too fine for her. Jules would have his way and chose the richest and stiffest black satin that he could find, saying, as he well might, that nothing could be too good for the mother to whom he owed so much. He took his grandfather for a walk on the Boulevards and showed him the chief theatres. But he was disappointed in the effect which the sight of these splendours had upon the poor old man. The old man yawned at the Opera and complained that he was tired of all the noise and bustle. So he soon went back to Damvillers to grow his geraniums and asters, and said that he was too old to leave home again.

That summer Bastien-Lepage paid his first visit to England. The fame of his portraits had already reached London, and he met with a cordial welcome. He never could learn a word of English, but the simplicity and *bonhomie* of the man delighted his admirers, and he made many friends. He visited our picture galleries, and was never tired of studying Rembrandt's etchings in the Print Room of the British Museum. He painted several portraits, amongst others one of Madame Alma Tadema, and sketched the banks of the river and the shipping in the Thames. And his last day in England was spent in making a drawing of the Prince of Wales. An amusing little story is told with

regard to this portrait. An Englishman whose name is well known in literary and artistic circles, and who had made friends with the young French artist, was at his club about six o'clock on Saturday evening, when he was told that a gentleman who could not speak a word of English wished to see him. The description, he felt at once, could apply to no one excepting Bastien-Lepage, and true enough, much to his surprise, he found the painter who had already taken leave of him and was leaving town that evening, awaiting him in a great state of perturbation. An hour before, he had received a note, of which he could not understand a word, but which, he was told, demanded his immediate attention. The letter, as his English friend informed him, came from Marlborough House, and contained an intimation to the effect that the Prince of Wales would give M. Bastien-Lepage a sitting on the following day. "That is impossible," replied the painter; "my things are already packed; I start in an hour's time for Paris." His friend begged him to defer his departure for a night, and pointed out the discourtesy of neglecting to obey, what was in fact, a royal command. Still Bastien-Lepage remained obdurate. He had promised his mother to be back at Damvillers on a certain day, and he could not disappoint her. And it needed all his friend's powers of persuasion to induce him to change his plans, and put off his departure until the following evening. In the end he yielded with a very bad grace, and presented himself at Marlborough House the next day. There he made a silver-point drawing of the Prince, and came away charmed with the genial manners and affable kindness of the Prince and Princess of Wales and their children, who had conversed with him in French, in what seemed to him the most natural manner in the world. "After all," he said to his friend, with an honest twinkle in his eye, "this time you were right." And that same evening he started on his way back to France. From this sketch which he had taken at Marlborough House, afterwards he painted his well-known portrait of the Prince of Wales in Holbein costume, with the masts of the Thames and the Tower of London in the background.

On his return to France, Bastien-Lepage was decorated with the Legion of Honour, and hurried home to set to work on his next great picture. This was to be the *Jeanne d'Arc*, of which he had dreamed

so long, a Jeanne d'Arc not of his atelier, but a true shepherdess of Lorraine. Before beginning his picture, he paid a visit to Domrémy, accompanied by his faithful mother, and saw the birthplace of the heroic maid, and the cottage where she had lived. A complete series of studies for this picture, seven or eight in number, were collected in the Exhibition of Bastien-Lepage's works, that was held after his death. And he has himself described the successive stages of thought by which he reached the form of composition which he finally adopted for his picture.

Jeanne d'Arc, he began by saying to himself, was a simple and devout maiden, of a thoughtful and contemplative nature. Often she was to be seen on her knees in the village church, praying to the virgin saints Katherine and Margaret, and the great archangel Michael, whose carved images adorned the altar of Domrémy. Often as she knelt there, she thought of the distracted state of her poor country and of the misery which she saw around her. And as she prayed to God and the Saints for help, it seemed to her that a voice from heaven called her to go forth and save her unhappy land. Accordingly the artist's first idea was to represent Jeanne on her knees before the altar of the village church, and he made a beautiful drawing of the kneeling maid with her hands clasped in prayer and her head raised in a listening attitude. But then his love for open-air subjects got the better of his first resolve. He remembered how Jeanne d'Arc had said that the mysterious voices followed her everywhere, and haunted her both at her work and in her sleep. So he drew a coloured sketch on the walls of his studio, in which he represented his heroine, in the gray homespun bodice and brown skirt of the Lorraine peasants, spinning under the fruit-trees of her father's orchard. That orchard was the garden of Damvillers with the rose-bushes and the flowers and vegetables growing together under the pear-trees and the apple-trees, and wild flowers in the long grass of the meadow beyond. And in the background he painted the white walls and the red roofs of the cottage at Domrémy. Still he was not satisfied. He altered Jeanne's attitude and represented her standing under an apple-tree with her right arm hanging down and her left hand grasping the leaves of a bush at her side. She has started to her feet, overturning the spinning-wheel in her agitation, and listens with a rapt

look on her face to the voices that are calling her by name. But it was some time before the artist could find the exact head he wanted for his Jeanne d'Arc. The type of face was to be that of the ordinary Meuse peasant-girl, with low brow, high cheek-bones, and square chin. But the right expression was hard to get, and he drew a dozen different



Joan of Arc listening to the Voices.

heads before he could satisfy himself. When at length he succeeded he wrote joyfully to his friend Charles Baude : "I really think I have found the head of my Jeanne d'Arc, and every one agrees that the resolve to start on her mission is well expressed in her face, while the simple

charm of the peasant is retained. Her attitude is, I think, very pure and gentle, as it ought to be. . . . But I shall see you soon, and I had rather leave you the pleasure of the surprise which you will receive from the first sight of the picture. You will judge of it all the better and be better able to tell me what you think of it."

But another difficulty remained to be solved. How were the unseen voices to be represented? The painter's friends were all of opinion that the saints whose call she hears should be invisible. Suppress your phantoms, they said, and depend on the expression of Jeanne's face alone for the desired effect, and your conception will gain immensely in dramatic force and in artistic beauty. But this idea did not content Bastien-Lepage. The maid's vision, he felt, must be embodied in a palpable form, the saints must be present if the mystic meaning of Jeanne d'Arc's story was to be fully realised. At one time he thought of representing the gilt and painted images of the patron saints of Domrémy, as hidden among the fruit-trees of the orchard. But by degrees a happier inspiration prevailed. In the pure dreams of Jeanne, he reflected, the "blessed saints" would appear in a glorified form, with the light of paradise on their brows. And so he painted the great archangel in his shining armour and the white-robed virgins, dimly seen through the luminous mist that streams from heaven.

The artist's friends hurried down to Damvillers to see the work into which the artist had put so much of his heart. His own hopes were high, and great things were expected. But when *Jeanne d'Arc écoutant les Voix* appeared in the Salon of 1880, there was a general feeling of disappointment. The strangeness of the composition repelled the public, and many of the painter's warmest admirers were puzzled. The representation of the voices was condemned on all sides, and the critics complained of a certain confusion of form and want of atmosphere and perspective in the picture. And in some measure, no doubt, they were right. The artist had tried to say too much, in his anxiety to be perfectly true to nature. The details of his background were too elaborately painted. The mass of tangled leaves and thorns had been allowed to come too far forward, and interfered with the effect of the central figure. And yet, in spite of these defects Bastien-Lepage's

Jeanne d'Arc remains a great and noble picture. No one can look at that wonderful face and form without feeling how completely the artist has realised his own idea. His Jeanne is the true peasant-maid of Domrémy, pure, and good, and simple, and wholly rapt in thoughts of the unseen. The figure itself is a masterpiece of drawing. The attitude of passionate attention, the upraised head, and wide-open blue eyes all tell the same tale. She is conscious of divine presences about her and hears the sound of heavenly voices, and she rises up, without delay, to follow the call of God.

If Bastien Lepage had painted nothing else, he would deserve to rank among the great masters of expression, for the sake of this one figure. And if on its first appearance in the Salon of 1880, it failed to produce the effect which might have been expected, there were some at least upon whom the impression which it then made was never forgotten.

"Nothing in painting has ever moved me like the *Jeanne d'Arc* of Bastien-Lepage," wrote Marie Bashkirtseff, a frank and at times a severe critic of the pictures which she most admired. "There is something indescribably mysterious and marvellous about it. There you have a sentiment which the artist has thoroughly understood, the perfect and intense expression of a great inspiration,—something great and human, inspired and divine at the same moment, in fact what it actually was, and what no one before him had ever understood. Only think of all the *Jeanne d'Arcs* that had been painted before! Good Heavens! why they are as common as Ophelias and Gretchens! But in this incomparable artist you find what is only to be found in the sacred art of Italy, in the days when men believed in what they painted." But the jury of the Salon took the popular view, and the medal of honour which Bastien-Lepage had hoped to win, was awarded to a far inferior work, the *Good Samaritan* of Aimé Morot. *Jeanne d'Arc* was promptly bought by an American collector and taken to Boston, where the great picture received the homage which it had failed to win in Paris. When it came back to France for the Exhibition of 1889, there was a general feeling of regret at the loss of a work which, by reason both of its subject and its merit, should have found a place in the Louvre. But it was too late then to repair the wrong. Bastien-Lepage himself was bitterly disappointed, not so much

at the loss of the medal, as at the failure of a picture upon which he had spent so much time and thought, and which, he was conscious, represented the best that he had to give. In his sadness he began to doubt his own powers, and seriously asked himself and his friends if after all his theories of art were false.

"Tell me frankly," he said one evening to M. de Fourcaud, "what is wrong in my picture? They tell me that my values are not correct. That may be true, but upon my word I only paint things as I see them, and it is impossible that I should borrow other people's eyes. Or else, is it my subject to which people take exception? Well, that is Jeanne d'Arc, a young peasant girl of Lorraine, who sees visions. My figure is true; surely the rest may be left to my imagination." So he complained in his darker hours. But he soon recovered his usual courage and gaiety, and went off to England, where his friends welcomed him warmly, and he was everywhere received as an honoured guest. The few weeks which he spent in the midst of his variety of engagements he found time to paint several pictures, including a portrait of Mademoiselle Damain, of the Comédie Française, and a clever study of the London Docks, with the muddy waters of the Thames flowing under a gray sky. And by August he was back at Damvillers, planning new pictures and working with renewed activity.

V

The next two years were the most productive in Bastien-Lepage's life. That autumn he painted his beautiful harvest landscape *Les Blés Murs*, with the reaper in the foreground, putting in his sickle to cut down the golden corn, and the sun breaking out behind a passing storm-cloud, over the purple hills and distant woods of Réville. Among his smaller sketches for future pictures were his *Vendanges* and his *Femme Enceinte*; among his larger studies, the Peasant visiting the field on Sunday, and an old woman anxiously examining the blossoms of her apple-tree on a cold spring morning, to see what damage the night frost

had done, and asking herself if she will have any fruit this year. A colporteur hurrying across the plain in driving rain was another subject which he began at Damvillers, that winter, while during his brief visits to Paris he was busy executing the orders of portraits which now reached



The Beggar.

him on all sides. That of M. Albert Wolff appeared at the following Salon (1881) together with *Le Mendiant*. The artist had gone back to one of his earliest impressions, in this life-size picture of the sturdy beggar who

has grown old in tramping from door to door. He is the very type of the habitual mendicant, dirty, ragged and lazy, shod in huge sabots and armed with a stout stick which he is quite ready to use in his own defence if necessary. The cunning old tramp has started on his rounds and has taken care to call at a house where he is sure of alms. The clean white shutters and garden seat, the iron ring to which a horse or donkey can be tied, the scarlet geraniums at the window are all signs of thrift and comfort which his experienced eye is quick to detect. He has told his habitual tale and has received the expected dole, in the shape of a loaf of bread, which he stows away in his roomy pouch, while the pretty little girl in trim frock and pinafore and white collar, who has been sent out to him, lingers at the door, with wondering eyes, to take another look at this strange visitor. This time the story was easy enough to read, the character of the figures and force of the painting were undeniable, and there was a touch of humour in the incident which appealed to the popular taste. The public which had failed to appreciate *Jeanne d'Arc* gave *Le Mendiant* a cordial reception, and Bastien-Lepage reaped the solid fruits of a popular success.

The picture of *Père Jacques*, which was exhibited the following year in the Salon of 1882, was intended as a companion or rather as a contrast to *Le Mendiant*. This time the artist told his friends, laughingly, he would show them an honest man, and *Le brave Homme* was the name which he originally chose for his picture, although when he sent it to the exhibition he changed his mind and called it *Le Père Jacques*, after the old Damvillers woodman who had sat to him for the figure. The aged peasant whom he painted, bearing his heavy load of faggots home, through the autumn woods, on a cold November afternoon, was the very type of the respectable labourer. *Père Jacques* has worked hard, it is plain, all his life long, and has seen bad times, but he has not toiled and saved in vain. Now, as he wends his way slowly home, at the close of the brief autumn day, he knows that a good fire and a comfortable meal are awaiting him there. The little grandchild who trips before him, in her neat print frock and blue apron, half-hidden in the grass as she stoops to pick the last flower of the forest, is a living proof of the order and happiness that reigns in the old woodcutter's home, of the love which cheers the evening of his life. The contrast between the gray-

headed old man and the fair-haired child charmed all hearts, and when the Salon closed, *Père Jacques* was sold to a London picture-dealer, for whom Bastien-Lepage also painted his famous *gamin*, *Pas-Mêche*. This celebrated work, one of the most lifelike specimens of humanity ever put upon canvas, was the first of several pictures of children which were among the most popular of the artist's creations. There was his *Petite Coquette* and *Petite Fauvette* and *Allant à l'Ecole*, that well-known picture of the rosy-cheeked child, carrying her lesson books and wrapping her shawl closer round her, as she goes to school, on a snowy winter's morning. And there was the peasant-boy looking at the rainbow, which the painter sketched out on a large scale, but which, like so many more of his finest conceptions, was doomed to be left unfinished.

The growing popularity of his peasant-pictures had not led him to give up other subjects. He was anxious to paint an Annunciation, and drew a sketch of the subject in oils, as well as another of Golgotha at dawn of day, with the three crosses set on the hill in the dim morning light. Another subject which especially attracted his imagination was the death of Ophelia. On one of his visits to London he had seen *Hamlet* at the Lyceum, and had returned to Damvillers deeply impressed with Shakspeare's conception. He saw in this hapless maiden a "*miserable d'amour*," an eternal type of unrequited love, of the failures and disappointments of human life. In his eyes, Ophelia was the most touching of victims and her end the most pathetic thing in tragedy. In August 1881 he began his picture on a large scale.

"I have made some progress," he wrote to Charles Baude, "with a large picture of Ophelia. I think it will be a good thing to make her an entire contrast to my Beggar, that is to say a really touching Ophelia, as heartrending as if she were really alive. The poor foolish child no longer knows what she is about. Her face bears marks of her grief and her madness. She is close to the edge of the water, leaning against a willow, the smile of her last song is still on her lips and her eyes are full of tears. Only a branch supports her, and she is slipping unawares into the stream close beside her. Another moment, and she will be in the water. She wears a pale blue bodice, half blue, half green, a white skirt with loose folds, her pockets are full of flowers and behind her you see the

river banks—a wooded bank with tall flowering grasses and thousands of hemlocks—flowers like stars in the sky, and in the back of the picture, a wooded hill-side, with the sun setting behind birches and nut-trees. That is the scenery.”



Sketch for the Death of Ophelia.

But this beautiful poetic scheme, which the artist had thought out in all its details, was never completed, and the sketch here reproduced is all that is left us. He was interrupted in his work, and when he

returned to Damvillers, other thoughts came crowding on his brain and Ophelia was put off—till a more convenient season.

That autumn he took a short journey to North Italy and sketched the lake of Como and the water streets of Venice, but the art of Titian and Tintoret did not appeal to him, and he was glad to come back to the peasants and fields of Lorraine. In June 1882, he paid his last visit to London. There he painted a brilliant little portrait of M. Coquelin and his well-known picture of Blackfriars Bridge. The streets of London were a source of endless interest and amusement to him, and he brought home a large picture of a flower-girl and a smaller study of a shoe-black in his red jacket leaning against a post, at the corner of the crowded thoroughfare, a figure so lifelike that, a visitor to his studio remarked, you seem to hear the sound of the wheels all round him.

Bastien-Lepage was a great man now. Each of his works was hailed with a fresh burst of applause, and he himself was courted and caressed by the leaders of Parisian society. Invitations poured in upon him and his company was in great request. At first sight, his youthful and insignificant appearance might be disappointing, but a closer acquaintance soon revealed the man's powers. He had read widely and thought deeply upon many subjects. His perfect simplicity and absence of affectation made him a pleasant companion, and when he found a sympathetic listener, he would talk freely of his home and early life, and of the pictures which he meant to paint. "Genius is a grand thing," exclaimed Marie Bashkirtseff one evening when she first met the painter, whose works she had so long admired. "This ugly little man is an angel in my eyes, and I could spend my whole life in hearing him talk of his pictures. It is really beautiful to understand art and to feel as he feels. And he speaks so naturally. He replied to some remark that was made to-night, 'I always find so much poetry in Nature,' with an accent of such perfect sincerity and conviction, that I cannot forget it now. . . . I really believe I shall end by thinking him handsome! At all events, he has the infinite charm which belongs to men of real power and greatness, who are conscious of their worth without any conceit or nonsense."

In 1887, he left his old atelier in the Rue de Maine for a larger and pleasanter quarters in the Rue Légendre, near the Parc de Monceau.

But the change in his circumstances had not altered his character. He was the same true friend and good comrade as in old days, and was never so happy as when he could escape from the *salons* of the great world to join a party of his old companions. One such joyous meeting M. Theuriet recalls, in the summer of 1881, when the members of an Alsace-Lorraine society, to which both he and the painter belonged, went down the river to dine at Suresnes. That day Bastien-Lepage was the gayest of the gay. He collected pence on board the steamer for a blind beggar, revelled in the loveliness of the blossoming hawthorns and acacias of the Bois de Boulogne, and shouted joyous songs at the top of his voice, as they went home under the stars. In January 1881, he had been elected a member of the Council of the Société des Artistes Français, and both in this capacity and as one of the Salon *jury*, was frequently called upon to attend meetings. He kept his engagements punctually, but these frequent interruptions were a tax upon his time, and although his first glimpses of the gay world amused him, before long he found the distracting influences of Paris too much for him. His advice to promising young artists was always the same. Economise your strength and concentrate the whole energies of your body and soul upon your art. But it was impossible for him to carry out his own principles, when, at all hours of the day, his doors were beset by struggling artists or by fine ladies who clamoured for his presence at their balls and parties. He became restless and moody, and complained that life was not long enough to satisfy all the demands upon his time. But once he could escape to Damvillers, his cheerfulness and good temper returned, and he looked forward confidently to a day when he might be able to give up painting portraits, and devote himself entirely to his work in his country home.

After his return from England in July, 1882, he finished several important pictures. One of these was his *Rives d'Avril*, a group of women washing their clothes in the river under the flowering apple-trees of a Damvillers orchard, in the fitful sunshine of an April day. Another was the exquisite little idyll of *Le Soir au Village*, the village street in the quiet stillness of evening, with the moon climbing over the top of the roofs and two figures seeking their homes in the fading twilight. A third which attracted even greater attention, was *La Forge*, a small study of a blacksmith's shop, with its glowing coals, throwing a fine

Rembrandt effect of light on the face of an old man, as he bends at work over his anvil.

In January 1883, Bastien-Lepage and his brother Emile were employed to design the funeral car of Léon Gambetta, and both painter and architect walked in the solemn procession immediately behind the bier. Jules painted a picture of the statesman lying dead in the humble room at Ville d'Avray, with the wreaths of flowers resting on his lifeless corpse



Sketch of Gambetta after Death.

and an expression of happy serenity on his sleeping face. "I am not afraid of death," the artist said, as he showed M. de Fourcaud his picture. "It is nothing to die; but the question is, which of us will live in the remembrance of the world? . . . Ah! well, let us do our work honestly and leave the rest." He little dreamt then how near death was, and how little more time was left him for work.

The cold was severe at the time. Jules caught a chill painting in the

dark little room at Ville d'Avray and went home ill. For some time past he had been ailing, and now he was laid up for several weeks with acute rheumatic pains. But as soon as he was fit to work, he began a new open-air picture, and sat out in the garden painting, wrapt up in rugs, for whole days together. This time his theme was that of rustic courtship, a subject after his own heart. The simple tale is charmingly told. It is a spring evening in Damvillers, and the church spire and village roofs are seen on the rising ground behind the garden hedge where the peasant-girl is hanging out her clothes to dry. A lad of twenty has left his work to bring his sweetheart a flower, and lingers at her side with downcast eyes. He has something more to say; but words are hard to find, and he leans on the stile with a shamefaced look on his honest face and twists his fingers together in clumsy silence. The girl's face is turned away. We only see the outline of her cheek, the hand holding the flower, and the back of her head with the short plaits of hair falling on her neck. Yet every line reveals the thoughts that are passing in her mind, the new and confused emotions that are stirring in her breast. And all around the hedges are breaking into flower, the orchards blossom under a pearly sky, and the old earth smiles in its spring loveliness on this young dream of love.

Early in March, M. Theuriet and another friend went down to Damvillers in answer to the painter's pressing invitation, to see his picture before it started for Paris. The whole family—grandfather, mother, and sons—met them at the door and gave them a hearty welcome. The next day they saw *L'Amour au Village* and a new picture, *Le Petit Ramoneur*, on which he was then engaged. He had painted the little chimney-sweep in all his blackness, eating his roll with evident enjoyment, and throwing crumbs to the cats, who watch his proceedings with friendly attention and a keen eye to their own interests. The snow still lay thick on the ground, but the beeches were budding and the larks sang of coming spring. Bastien-Lepage took long walks in the woods with his friends and talked freely of his future plans. He had bought a neighbouring orchard and meant to build a chalet, where his friends might come and spend the summer and share the pleasures of his rural retreat. And he discussed the criticisms which had been made on his *Père Jacques* in the last Salon, and defended himself from the charge of

want of atmosphere and perspective, which was often brought against his open-air pictures. "Here we are in a wood," he said, "and as yet there are no leaves on the boughs, but you see how little the figure stands out from the thick growth of trees and brushwood. There is a great deal of prejudice, depend upon it, in the fault which people find with the perspective of my open-air pictures. It is the criticism of men who have never looked at a landscape, except when they are sitting down. Then you see more of the sky, and trees and houses or living beings stand out sharply, and the effect of greater distance and wider atmosphere is naturally given. But this is not the ordinary way in which we look at the landscape. We see it when we are on our feet, and then objects, both animate or inanimate, instead of standing out against the sky, are seen in profile against the trees, or the fields, and mingle with the background, which seems to come forward. The fact is, we must renew the training of the eye by looking at things as they are in nature, instead of accepting the theories and conventions of the schools and studio as absolute truths."

The evenings of M. Theuriet's visit were spent in cheerful talk and round games, in which Jules took care that his grandfather should always hold the best cards and took the greatest delight in the old man's childish pleasure at his good luck. The painter himself had never seemed in better spirits, and before the party broke up, he insisted on etching a plate, in which the whole group was represented listening to the recital of a fable of La Fontaine, by one of the guests. When his friends returned to Paris, he made them promise to come back the following September and spend a long holiday at Damvillers.

VI

A few weeks later, *L'Amour au Village* appeared at the Salon, and was greeted with acclamation. The shy young girl was declared to be a poem in herself, the painting of her fair head and of the lad's torn gaiters was applauded as a marvel of execution. So unanimous was the verdict of approval, that scarcely one critic noticed the real fault of the

picture, the peculiar tint of pale green in which the background is painted, a colour commonly used by the artist, which here strikes the eye as at once too uniform and too prominent. Bastien-Lepage's name was on every lip that summer, but the painter himself was missed from the circles where his presence was most frequent, and he was supposed to have gone home. It only transpired later that he was already suffering from the terrible disease which ended his life, and that after undergoing a serious operation for cancer, he had been sent for change of air to Concarneau in Brittany. Here he spent the summer days in a boat, making studies of the sea, which he had already tried to paint on his visits to England, and which inspired him with new delight each time he approached its shores.

In August he returned to Paris, showed his friends his Brittany sketches, and appeared once or twice in Madame Bashkirtseff's *salon*. His good spirits deceived others, and he spoke with great earnestness of the works which he meant to paint during the winter. One was to be the *Shepherds on their way to Bethlehem*, the other that long-thought-of *Enterrement d'une jeune Fille*, for which he had already prepared several careful sketches. The contrast between the joy and beauty of the spring-time and the sorrow of death is forcibly brought out in the painter's design. A group of young girls, dressed in white with black tippets, lead the way. One of them bears a cross which has caught in the boughs of a flowering apple tree, scattering the white blossoms over the procession. A spray falls on the bier, which draped in white, and attended by priest and acolytes, is borne aloft on men's shoulders, and the white houses of the village are seen in the background, gleaming in the spring sunshine.

Full of this touching and impressive idea, which had taken strong hold of his imagination, Bastien-Lepage went back to Damvillers in October, and reached home in time to witness the last moments of his aged grandfather. He felt the old man's death keenly, and wrote full of grief to his friends: "You have no idea how empty the house feels. Only a few days ago, the door might open at any moment and the grandfather might appear. The sight of his good face was enough. We reason with ourselves and appear brave and resigned. But behind all that, there is a painful sense of blank, of absolute hunger. If only one



J. Bastien-Lepage, Fine.

Walter L. Galt, Ph. Sc.

Love in the Village.

could still take his hand ! Ah ! my friend, it is hard, and I have been and am still quite ill. I cannot work, and have been out to-day for the first time, shooting larks on a fine day, in a bright sun, and through a beautiful country, which did me good."



Sketch for the Burial of a Young Girl.

His own health was failing fast. He still struggled to work, but each day his sufferings seemed to grow worse. The letters which he wrote to his friends that winter, are very touching in their tender affection, and in the deepening sense which they reveal of the beauty of

the world that he was so soon to leave. Never before had the sunsets been so full of solemn splendour ; never had the leafless woods and the dead yellow grasses been so fair in their pale soft tints. What effects he caught as he lingered at twilight on the edge of the forest, what glories he saw when the dawn broke over the low hills, or the dark masses of rolling clouds swept across the midnight sky ! Each day the curtain rose on a new scene, and he could not paint fast enough to keep a record of all the lovely changes that followed each other in such quick succession. And all the while he was slowly dying of a wasting disease. When he came to Paris in March to consult the doctors, he did not know that he was leaving Damvillers for the last time. His friends found him terribly altered, and the weary look in his eyes told them how much he had suffered. But he tried to talk cheerfully, and said, as he showed them his last drawings, "When people see these at George Petit's, they will say after all little Bastien knew how to paint landscape when he chose!"

A journey to Algiers was recommended, and his "valiant little mother," as he called her, who had never left home except for a few days, at once prepared to accompany him. They reached Algiers when the spring was in its full beauty, and at first the change seemed to relieve his pain. He wrote long letters to his friends in Paris, describing the luxuriant wealth of vegetation, the orange and lemon and palm trees in his garden, and the delicate tints of rose and pearl in the white walls of the old Arab town on the green hillside, with the blue sea beyond. The Arabs, too, filled him with admiration. He was never tired of watching their splendid forms, and calm and noble bearing. "They are knaves, people tell me. What does it matter? They are beautiful. . . Each of them wears his *burnous* draped in a fashion peculiar to himself. There again you see the triumph of truth over conventional arrangement. The sorrowful man, whether he knows it or not, never puts on his clothes in the same way as the gay. Beauty, I am convinced, is absolute truth, neither to the right nor to the left, but straight before us." Soon, he adds, he will be able to paint again, and then what studies he will have to bring home ! But his sufferings returned, and his strength failed as the summer heats came on. His brother joined him in Algiers, and told him of the great success which had attended



Sketch for the Burial of a Young Girl.

the exhibition of his recent works at Petit's gallery that spring, and of the admiration which his *Forge* had excited at the Salon. All Paris was talking of his pictures, and longing to see him back again. Late in June they brought him home. He bore the journey well, but by this time all hope of recovery had vanished, and the next six months were one long struggle with increasing pain and weakness. Yet he longed to paint more than ever, and often said how gladly he would give up everything for three months of health and power to work. "What beautiful pictures I could paint now," he said to his Russian friend, Prince Bojidar Karageorgevitch, "if only I had strength to work. I have learnt a great deal since I left off painting, and have done nothing but think about it." But his painting days were over. The last drawing that he ever made was a portrait of himself in pencil, as he lay in bed, with long hair and sunken eyes, a mere shadow of his former self.

His Russian friend, Marie Bashkirtseff and her mother paid him frequent visits, and drove with him on fine days in the Bois de Boulogne. This brilliant Russian girl, who had long been one of the warmest admirers of Bastien-Lepage's genius, and whose own picture had met with great success at the Salon of that year, was herself dying of consumption. She was just twenty, and had all that the world could give. And now that she seemed to be entering on a great career, like him she was stricken with mortal disease. No wonder that a bond of more than common sympathy drew the two together in these last weeks of their lives. "He is dying," wrote Marie in her journal on the 1st of October. "When you are as far gone as that, you cease to care for earthly things. Already his soul soars above us. I only go to see him from habit. He is but a shadow, and I too am half a shadow. My presence is no longer of use to him. I cannot bring back the light to his eyes. But he is glad to see me." When she became too ill to leave home, Bastien-Lepage came to see her, and was carried upstairs to the large drawing-room in Madame Bashkirtseff's house. The change seemed to do him good; he talked with Marie of art and books, and liked to look at the dark-eyed girl with her wealth of fair hair lying there wrapt in soft folds of white lace and plush. The sight of these different tints of white recalled the pictures which he had painted in the days of health and strength. "Ah! if I could but paint now!" he cried. The 20th of October was a glorious

autumn day. Bastien-Lepage came as usual, supported by his brother. But once on the couch, his strength was utterly exhausted. "And to think," wrote Marie in her journal that evening, "how many *concierges* are in rude health." They never met again. Eleven days afterwards Marie Bashkirtseff was dead. Bastien-Lepage lingered on five weeks longer. On the night of the 9th of December he was very wakeful, and talked to his mother and brother of Damvillers and of the old home, which was ever present to his mind. At last the clock struck four, and he said with a smile "It is time for children to go to sleep." When he woke, his sight was already dim, and his limbs were growing stiff. Towards evening the long agony was over, and his eyes closed in the last sleep.

Two days afterwards his remains were taken to Damvillers. The whole population of the village joined in the funeral procession, and followed the painter to his resting place in the little churchyard, where the last wild flowers of the year were mingled with the laurel wreaths which lay thick upon the sod. An apple-tree was planted by his mother on the spot, and each year as spring comes round the white blossoms which the painter loved so well fall like snow upon his grave. Five years afterwards a statue of Bastien-Lepage was set up by the roadside at Damvillers. It was the work of his friend, the great sculptor Auguste Rodin, and no more living image was ever carved in stone. The painter stands there in his short coat and cape, looking over the fields and orchards of his home. His brush and palette are in his hand, his glance is as keen, his step as resolute as of old. The peasants who see that familiar form say that he seems to live again, and to be watching them as they go to and fro at their work.

In the spring after Bastien-Lepage's death, a complete exhibition of his works was held at the Hotel de Chimay, close to l'Ecole des Beaux Arts. All his great pictures were there, with the single exception of *Jeanne d'Arc*, which could not be brought across the Atlantic in time. All his wonderful little portraits were there too, and all the chief drawings and studies he had left behind him, from the canvas of *La Source*, which had been struck by a shell during the Siege of Paris, down to his last sketch of the moon rising over the sea in Algiers.

The critics who had called him a mere realist, saw with wonder all the poetry which this man had found in the skies and in the fields. They



The Chimney Sweep.

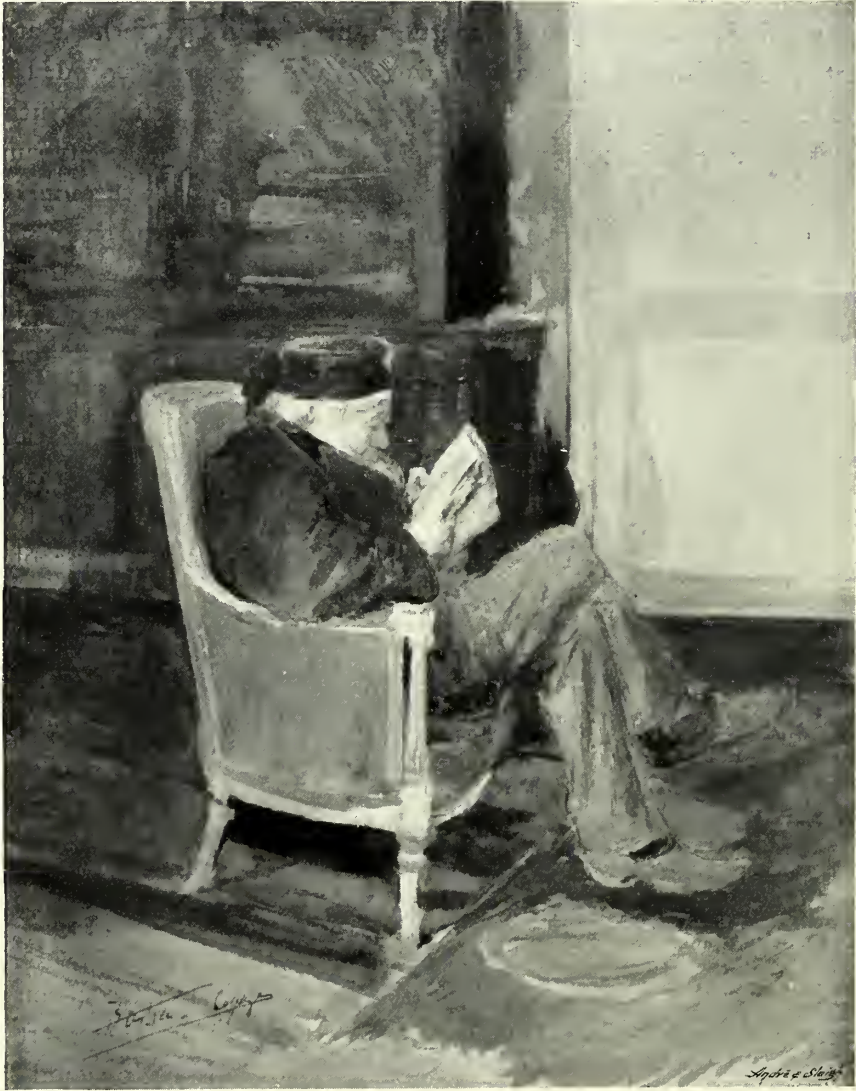
saw his *Orpheus* and his *Ophelia*, his *Andromeda* and his *Angel of the Annunciation* side by side with the haymakers and potato gatherers of Damvillers, the docks of London and the seas of the wild Breton shore, by the landscapes of his own Lorraine, and they marvelled at the variety of his subjects and diversity of his styles, as much as at the quantity of brilliant and original work which had been crowded into these few years. They saw, too, the sketches for the pictures which he had left undone, the studies for his great *Entombment*, the lovely sunrise drawing for the *Shepherds of Bethlehem*, and the designs for the *Burial of a Young Girl*, which was to have been his picture for the Salon of 1885. And hanging on the same wall, in startling contrast with these touching drawings which tell of sorrow and death, was the lifelike portrait of the artist painted by his own hand. There we saw him in all the vigour of his manhood, with the frank gaze and thoughtful brow, the keen eye and the anxious expression which marked the countenance of this earnest seeker after truth. Sad as the sight was, for Bastien-Lepage that day was a great triumph. Then for the first time, the world began to see the full extent of its loss, and realise all the power and promise of the young master who had been cut off in his prime. Had he lived but a few more years, there can be little doubt that he would have painted some greater and more dramatic picture than he had done before. But it is idle to speculate when death has said the last word. We can only gather up what remains, and be thankful for the fine and thoughtful work which he has left behind.

VII

The general impression left by Bastien Lepage's work confirms the honesty of his repeated declaration that he had no object in his art but truth. "*Faisons vrai!*" was the motto which he himself would have wished to see inscribed over his pictures. Truth—as Mr. Ruskin said of those earnest young Englishmen whom the French master resembled in his closeness of observation and intensity of feeling—Truth was the vital power of his art, his armour and his watchword.

"There is only one to be admired," said Bastien Lepage, "that is

Nature. There is only one art and that is to reproduce Nature." The consequence of this simple faith, which was complicated in his own mind



The Artist's Grandfather. From a water-colour drawing.

by no æsthetic considerations, was that his works are remarkable for their veracity. This veracity is of a very comprehensive kind. It does not

attach itself to any special department of nature, but includes everything that he attempts to represent. But although a realist of a very decided kind, Bastien-Lepage is not to be classed among the men who despise artistic selection and have a positive aversion for beauty. It is true that beauty is never his primary aim, but it is none the less present in his works and was seldom absent from his thoughts. No one can read his letters without feeling how keenly alive he was to natural beauty and what keen delight he took in all its varied forms. In his eyes the word no doubt may have had a wider meaning, and his idea of beauty may not have been the same as ours. He found beauty alike in the subtle expression of a human face, and in the ploughed fields under the gray skies of autumn, and to make others feel this pathos and poetry by a perfectly faithful rendering was the whole of his aim.

"At the present time," he said one day to M. Theuriet, "we have a number of very clever artists, but for all our skill, our painting for the most part, only serves to amuse people. It does not lay hold of them, because we ourselves do not paint with conviction. We must change our ways if any of our work is to live. We must try to see and reproduce that inmost radiance which lies at the heart of things, and which is the only true beauty, because it is the life."

Again, in spite of his careful fidelity to nature and anxiety to follow her as closely as possible his work was no mere photographic reproduction of life. He would not adopt conventional arrangements of composition or "prettify types," but he brought the eye of a true artist to the study of natural fact.

This is best proved by the great variety of his execution, more minutely truthful in one picture than in another, and ever careful to note the objects on which he desired to fix the spectator's attention. At the same time Bastien-Lepage's work is not free from defects in this direction. In his eager desire to be truthful, and to reproduce every part of nature, he too often sacrificed general effect, and allowed the essential facts to become obscured by a mass of detail. This tendency, which weakens the impression of some of his finest pictures, would, there can be little doubt, have been gradually overcome, if he had lived longer, and his work would have gained in proportion.

The wide range of Bastien-Lepage's art, and his proficiency in

different branches of painting has been sufficiently proved. But he also worked in other materials, and tried his hand both at modelling and etching. Three sketches by him in clay remain. One is an impressive portrait-bust of his father, modelled by him after Claude Bastien-Lepage's death and cast in bronze. The second is a figure of Jeanne d'Arc as a shepherdess leaning upon her crook. The third and finest of the group is a small statuette of Orpheus with his lyre, which Sarah Bernhardt held in her hand when her portrait was painted. There it appears as a statuette, and it has accordingly been usually described as some rare antique, belonging to the actress, whereas it was, in point of fact, the painter's own work.

In his later years Bastien-Lepage devoted some attention to etching, and executed as many as twenty plates.

"These, however," writes Mr. Hamerton, "are relatively of very slight importance. Bastien-Lepage never attained to much manual power as an etcher, and in fact, at the time of his death, was in this art like a skater who has not yet felt the edge of his skate. I believe he would have mastered the art later, if he had lived to pursue it. The two best plates he has left are one in dry point of Theuriet, the novelist, and his family and a portrait of Rodin, the sculptor. I may also mention a peasant-girl seen from behind. She is holding a rake and is standing in a landscape characteristic of Eastern France, with thin poplars standing three by three, and most of their branches lopped off. There are also two or three plates of peasants at work in rural occupations. However, I do not insist upon Bastien-Lepage's merits as an etcher. He was no more than an experimentalist in the art, though his experiments were in the right direction, and he did not waste time in useless labour. His pen-drawings are good painter's pen-drawings, though they do not resemble the technical displays of the clever modern specialists in pen-draughtsmanship. In water-colour he has left a remarkable sketch portrait of his grandfather reading his newspaper in a gray arm-chair near a book-case. In this sketch the whole of the background is as much suggested as the characteristic figure, but nothing is realised. It is an excellent example of genuine sketching in water-colour, without any attempt to rival oil, and without the employment of body-colour

for the lights, all of which are reserved. The colour, which is excellent, is chiefly in grays and browns, passing in places into violet and pale blue, and there is very little definition, though everything is suggested.

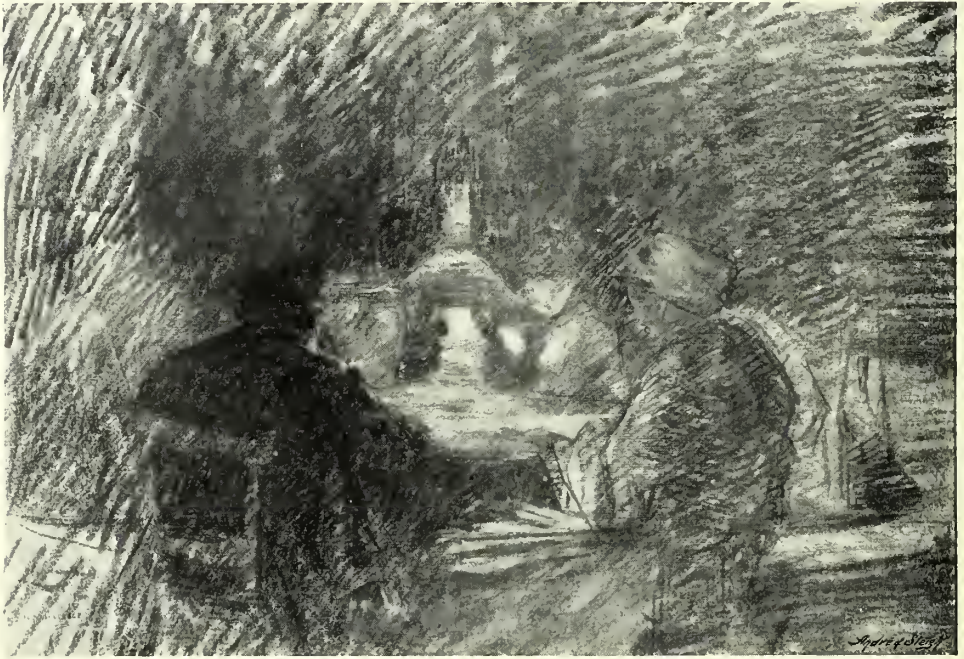


Statuette of Orpheus.

It is technically nearer to Turner's water-colour sketching than to such definite drawing as we see, for instance, in the artist's portrait of M. Emile Bastien-Lepage. All his drawings, including his water-colours, have the valuable quality of stopping short in time. In oil,

he was able to carry finish as far as he liked, and yet keep it sound and proportionate throughout. In a word, he was a master of oil-painting and sufficiently a master of other graphic arts for his own purposes."

It is hardly to be expected that the art of Bastien-Lepage will find favour with the critics of a school which resents the presence of ideas in painting as an intrusion, and sees no excellence in finish. But to speak of the master of Damvillers as a mere *salonnier*, who painted



Round the Lamp.

pictures for the sake of exhibition, and whose work is of the most commonplace and uninteresting kind, is as ignorant as it is unjust. No artist ever cared less for popular applause or material rewards. No man was ever more faithful to his own convictions, or more single-minded in his devotion to art. Whatever the defects of his work may be, it contains undoubted elements of vitality. It is at once strong and delicate, original and profound. It was inspired by the most passionate love of nature, and distinguished by a complete mastery of means. And this being the case, it cannot fail to live.

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Venus Verticordia.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

By

F. G. STEPHENS

*Author of "Celebrated Flemish and French Pictures,"
"Landseer," etc.*



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DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

PAINTER AND POET

CHAPTER I

1828—1851.

NOWHERE in Time's vista, where the forms of great men gather thickly, do we see many shapes of those who, as painters and as poets have been alike illustrious. Among the few to whom, equally on both accounts, conspicuous honours have been paid, none is superior to Rossetti, of whose genius doubly exalted the artists say that in design he was pre-eminent, while, on the other hand, the most distinguished poets of our age place him in the first rank with themselves. As to this prodigious, if not unique, distinction, of which the present age has not yet, perhaps, formed an adequate judgment, there can be no doubt that with regard to the constructive portion of his genius Rossetti was better equipped in verse than in design.

It is certain that our subject looked upon himself rather as a painter who wrote than as a verse-maker who painted. It is probable that the very facility, which, of course, had been won with enormous pains, and was maintained with characteristic energy and constant care, of his literary efforts led Rossetti to slightly undervalue the rare gifts of which his pen was the instrument, while, as to painting, his hard-won triumphs with design, colour, expression, form, and visible beauty of all sorts seemed to him the aptest as well as the most successful exponents of the passionate poetry it was, by one means or the other, his object to make manifest. His mission was that of a poet in art as in verse, and, by devoting the greater part of his life and all his more

arduous efforts to the former means, he made it plain that, notwithstanding all obstacles, the palette served his purpose better than the pen. I refer thus emphatically to Rossetti's genius in its double form as well as to the inevitable division of his energies which attended that circumstance, because, while I wonder at his achievements and know how great were the powers he employed, I cannot help thinking that a less complex nature than his would have done still more than, so far as time and space allow, these pages have to report of and illustrate.

Gabriel Charles Dante was the elder son, and, his sister Maria Francesca being his senior, the second child of Gabriele Rossetti and Frances Mary Lavinia, his wife, born Polidori; she wrote some poems and educational books of value, and died several years ago. William Michael, third child of this union (born in 1829), is the still living accomplished writer on poetry and art, and the tenant of a high post in the Inland Revenue Department, Somerset House. The fourth child is Miss Christina Georgina Rossetti (born 1830) whose *Goblin Market* attests her to be one of the most distinguished poetesses of this century. Gabriele Rossetti was descended from an Italian family of some renown, whose original name was Della Guardia, and he was born in 1783 at Vasto d'Ammonè, in the Abruzzi, the son of one Domenico, who was connected with the iron trade of that town. Gabriele, a man of culture, whose specialty was in profound studies of Dante—whence one of the names of his elder son—removed to Naples, and held an honourable office as custodian of antique bronzes in the then Bourbon Museum of the capital. This post and all his other possessions were forfeited in 1820, when he joined in revolutionary movements against Ferdinand I., King of the Two Sicilies, which, by the aid of the Austrians, were defeated and the chiefs proscribed. Among them Rossetti took refuge at Malta in 1822, and, ultimately, in London, where he arrived in 1825, and in the next year married the above-named lady, who was a daughter of Signor Gaetano Polidori, a secretary of Count Alfieri, the Italian poet and supposed second husband of Louisa of Stolberg, Countess of Albany, wife and widow of Charles Edward Stuart, the besotted Young Pretender. The wife of Signor Gaetano was a Miss Pierce, an Englishwoman. Besides the lady who became Mrs. Gabriele Rossetti, Gaetano had for his son Dr. Polidori, one of Lord

Byron's physicians, with whom his lordship fell foul in a certain *Epistle from Mr. Murray*, and who, with other things in verse and prose, wrote a sanguinary novelette called *The Vampire*, which still retains its shadow of a reputation. Arrived in London Gabriele Rossetti maintained himself as a teacher of his native tongue, and succeeded so well in that capacity that the Professorship of Italian in King's College was offered to him and accepted in 1831.

As might be expected of one possessing so many accomplishments and whose career had been marked by so much courage, the professor was a man of striking character and aspect, so that when I was introduced to him in 1848, and his grand climacteric was past, and, as with most Italians, a life of studies told upon him heavily, I could not but be struck by the noble energy of his face and by the high culture his expression attested, while a sort of eager, almost passionate, resolution seemed to glow in all he said and did. To a youngster, such as I was then, he seemed much older than his years, and while seated reading at a table with two candles behind him and, because his sight was failing, with a wide shade over his eyes, he looked a very Rembrandt come to life. The light was reflected from a manuscript placed close to his face, and, in the shadow which covered them, made distinct all the fineness and vigour of his sharply moulded features. It was half lost upon his somewhat shrunken figure wrapped in a student's dressing-gown, and shone fully upon the lean, bony, and delicate hands in which he held the paper. He looked like an old and somewhat imperative prophet, and his voice had a slightly rigorous ring speaking to his sons and their visitors. Near his side, but beyond the radiant circle of the candles—her erect, comely, and very English form, and face remarkable for its noble and beautiful matronhood, and but half visible in the flickering glow of the fire—sat Mrs. Rossetti, the mother of Dante Gabriel. He too, leaning his elbows upon the table and holding his face between both hands so that the long curling masses of his dark brown hair fell forward, sat on the other side, his attenuated features sharply outlined by the candle's light.

It is not certain whether the scene which thus impressed my memory was presented at No. 38, Charlotte Street, Portland Place, one of those then very "respectable," but dull, and now much deteriorated

opposing lines of brick walls, with rectangular holes in them, which Londoners call houses, where, on the 12th of May, 1828, our subject was born, or whether No. 50 in the same street was thus signalised. To the latter house the Rossetti family migrated about the time in question. It is fortunate that a "Board" has not, as in many neighbouring regions, changed the numbers of the houses in Charlotte Street, and that its monkey-like activity has, for the present at least, spared the record of a famous family. Nevertheless, the birthplace of the Rossettis will, doubtless, some day be marked with an honourable white stone. Certain it is that they were all born at No. 38, and that in April, 1854, at No. 50, the ardent self-sacrificing patriotism of Professor Gabriele Rossetti found its earthly close. Tennyson's "long unlovely" Wimpole Street, where the Laureate was wont to stand waiting for the

"hand that can be clasped no more,"

and which is close to our poet's birthplace, is not more "bald," than that which took its name from the ill-favoured wife of George III. Rossetti was christened Charles after Mr. Charles Lyell, his godfather, of Kinnochy, Fife (whose more famous son wrote *The Principles of Geology*), Gabriel, after his father, and Dante after the illustrious poet. We know that his first teaching was due to his mother, an accomplished and devoted matron whose affection was, even to his latest days, ceaselessly acknowledged by her son. Mr. Knight tells us the lad's first school was under the Rev. Mr. Paul, in Foley Street, whence, in 1837, he was with his brother, removed to King's College School, where he stayed till 1843, and received all the advantages of that capital academy; these, however, did not include what are now called "sports," a circumstance which of course had not a little influence on his character in after life.¹

¹ It has been said that Rossetti shared at least some of the athletic proclivities and aptitudes of British youth, and was accustomed to enjoy energetic exercises. This is quite a mistake, for, although he was in youth a tolerably good walker, he never excelled in that respect. It was an error which has made him appear as a rower; indeed, I remember when in my boat he proposed, because it was in his way, to throw overboard one of the stretchers (!); he never cared to swim, and, if he rode at all, he could not be called a rider. The fact is that, when he pleased, which, until his later days, was both often and long, no one worked harder than Rossetti; but, as a glance at his frame and face amply attested, his energy was not physical. In after life he deplored his youthful neglect of school games and struggles of the more manly kind.

At King's College School the Italian professor's son acquired, as his brother tells us, "an education in Latin, French, and the rudiments of Greek." Italian was, of course, his customary, if not his native tongue; to these collectively considerable attainments must be added a "certain knowledge of German," which was more than enough to enable him to read in that language. After some tentative and rather "boyish" literary efforts, resulting in an experimental drama, and a prose romance or two, one of which was printed by his grandfather, Mr. Gaetano Polidori, Rossetti determined to become an artist. This was in the autumn of 1843, a date which, however, must not be taken as that of the youth's beginning to draw. Indeed, his brother tells us that our subject was even then a member of a sketching club, and the same authority still possesses some drawings made in ink to illustrate a story of the designer's, called *Sorrentino*, by means of which, by the way, he even thus early appears in that double capacity of author and artist which always obtained with him. The influence of Retzsch and his once-famous *Outlines* anent *Faust* was manifest in all the productions of this category by Rossetti, as well as all his colleagues of the P-R.B. who could draw, that is six of the seven. Every one of these was accustomed to make designs in this manner. Thus, some of the finest "inventions" of Sir John Millais's most brilliant youth were, with stringent care and delicacy, put upon paper. That influence is manifest in the beautiful outlined design called *Genevieve*, which charms us in this text, and has not been reproduced till now.

There is no doubt that Rossetti's systematic training as an artist was begun in 1843, and at Mr. Cary's then well-known academy, which stood at the south-east corner of Charlotte Street and Bainbridge Street, Bloomsbury. It was a capital drill-ground for drawing from the antique, beyond which step of his training Rossetti did not pass in that place, including drawing from the human skeleton, but not painting. Here, with frequent excursions into the realms of poetry proper, he remained, I fear, in a somewhat desultory mood, rather less than three years, during which period he prepared the drawing of a statue, then demanded by the Royal Academy ere its tyros were admitted as Probationers to the Antique School in Trafalgar Square. In July, 1846, he was admitted a Student of the Academy. "I saw," says a fellow

student, "Rossetti, whom Fame of a sort had preceded, enter the school with a knot of Probationers, who, as if to keep each other in countenance, herded together. All their forerunners turned, as was natural, to the door of the room, and noticed among the freshmen the saturnine, thin, and for a youth of nearly eighteen, not well-developed tyro other 'Caryites' had talked of as a poet whose verses had been actually printed, and whom they described as a clever sketcher of chivalric and satiric subjects, who, in addition, did all sorts of things in all sorts of unconventional ways. Thick, beautiful, and closely curled masses of rich brown much-neglected hair, fell about an ample brow, and almost to the wearer's shoulders; strong eyebrows marked with their dark shadows a pair of rather sunken eyes, in which a sort of fire, instinct of what may be called proud cynicism, burned with a furtive kind of energy, and was distinctly, if somewhat luridly, glowing. His rather high cheekbones were the more observable because his cheeks were roseless and hollow enough to indicate the waste of life and midnight oil to which the youth was addicted; close shaving left bare his very full, not to say sensuous, lips and square-cut masculine chin. Rather below the middle height, and with a slightly rolling gait, Rossetti came forward among his fellows with a jerky step, tossed the falling hair back from his face, and, having both hands in his pockets, faced the student world with an *insouciant* air which savoured of defiance, mental pride and thorough self-reliance. A bare throat, a falling, ill-kept collar, boots not over familiar with brushes, black and well-worn habiliments, including, not the ordinary frock or jacket 'of the period,' but a very loose dress-coat which had once been new—these were the outward and visible signs of a mood which cared even less for appearances than the art-student of those days was accustomed to care, which undoubtedly was little enough. Apart from all these unconventionalities one saw at a glance that the partial slovenliness of the newcomer was far from being a sign of mere vanity affecting pride and, in contempt for others, seeking to be singular." It must be remembered that Rossetti had all his life been accustomed to meet in his father's house poets, scholars, and patriots of mark. When he entered the Academy he was by no means unknown, many a "Caryite" had preceded him from Bloomsbury, and not a few turned to welcome him to the Antique School.

In that school Rossetti worked somewhat less than was desirable, intermittently, and as if without a serious intention to profit by it to the utmost; nor did he ever pass to the higher grades of the Life and Painting Schools. It is clear that literature, abundant reading and writing poetry were his chief delights till about March, 1848, when, much stirred by the vigorous and noble design of Madox Brown's *Parisina*, which he saw at the British Institution in 1845, and thus strengthened impressions due to the same fine artist's contributions to the Westminster Hall Exhibitions of 1844 and 1845,¹ and, above all, to the pathos and originality of Brown's picture in the 'Free Exhibition' at Hyde Park Corner in 1848, he wrote to the latter expressing the highest admiration of his works, and begged for lessons in painting, in the technique of which our subject had, it is beyond question, made no considerable progress. This appeal was made in such enthusiastic terms that as, with a great deal of humour, Brown was wont to tell in after years, the recipient fancied such compliments were not unlikely to cover an intention to "make fun" of him. Brown therefore, before calling on his would-be pupil, provided himself with a thick stick and sallied forth, intending to use it if need be. To Charlotte Street he went, and seeing "Mr. Rossetti" on the doorplate was partly reassured, but held to the cudgel until the young Rossetti's manifest sincerity disarmed all suspicion and, finally, impelled Brown so warmly that he then and there undertook the office of a teacher, not for fees, but entirely for the love of art, and in order to be helpful to one so anxious and so deeply moved. Rossetti himself was wont gleefully to tell his intimates that the first result of Brown's teaching was dismay, because the subject set before the pupil for accurate and stringent imitation was a group of jars, such as pickle-pots, or some such things, in still life, the uncompromising prose of which did not suit the aspirations of the tyro. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt whatever that to Brown's guidance and example we owe the better part of Rossetti as a painter *per se*, although his will to study with tenacity, and thus command success, might have been stiffened by the encouragement and example of Mr. Holman Hunt, apart from which, I fear the latter-named student was not

¹ These were *The Body of Harold brought to the Conqueror*, a cartoon, 1844, and *Justice*, 1845.

the fittest guide for a genius like Rossetti, who very soon departed from the uncompromising principles of the indomitable friend who had never been, even for an hour, his model in art. Rather had the brilliant and happy power of Millais, one of the truest painters of the age and a born artist, been as light before the subject of these pages. Rossetti was considerably behind his friends. Brown was his senior by seven years, and a thoroughly trained artist, who had exhibited in this country in 1841; Millais was a Gold Medal Student in the Royal Academy before the foundation of the P-R.B., and an exhibitor in 1846; while Mr. Holman Hunt, an exhibitor from the last-named year, had passed through ordeals of practice and training of the most self-exacting stringency, far beyond what Rossetti, although he had never departed from the conviction that his chief function was painting, and not poetry, had submitted to.

Desiring to become a thoroughly trained painter, Rossetti wrote to Brown. It appears that, with greatly increased admiration of Brown's skill and genius, Rossetti had seen besides *Parisina*, and other instances at the British Institution, that artist's contribution to the "Free Exhibition of Modern Art,"¹ which in the spring of 1848, was formed near Hyde Park Corner. This noteworthy and epoch-marking instance was named *The First Translation of the Bible into English*, or, more aptly, *Wickliffe reading his Translation of the New Testament to John of Gaunt*. Painted in 1847-8, it was No. 216 at the gallery in question, where it attracted much attention, aroused abundant controversies, and, above all, allowing for the idiosyncrasies of the artist, was the first Pre-Raphaelite picture of the original stamp ever produced. It

¹ This gallery was afterwards known as the Portland Gallery, and removed to Regent Street, where it survived till 1861. It was originally held in the *ci-devant* Chinese Gallery, Hyde Park Corner, and filled a long, well-lighted brick building standing on a site in the rear of the present Alexandra Hotel, and originally constructed for the exhibition and sale of Chinese and Japanese *bric à brac*. The time not being ripe for an adequate development of that cult of quaintness and strong colour which has culminated in the wildest Impressionism, so-called, of which we are now witnessing the decline and fall, the Chinese Gallery, as an exhibition, came to grief in a year or two. It gave way to the "Free Exhibition," as it was humorously called, because there was nothing free about it, the artists paying for their places, besides a percentage on the prices of their pictures when they sold them there, while the public paid for the privilege of seeing them as well as for the catalogues which described them.

was, of course, exhibited months before the foundation of the Brotherhood in the autumn of 1848, and undertaken while the P-R.Bs. proper were still in their original darkness. A happy combination of Italian taste, and the technique of the Low Countries of the pre-Rubensian epoch, the gravity, energy, high finish, and pure and brilliant coloration of this noble piece had, as I said in the *Portfolio* of 1893, p. 66, profound effects upon the painters of the Brotherhood.

It was in the autumn of 1848, that Rossetti, finding the accommodation of the paternal house in Charlotte Street too limited for his purpose, joined Mr. Holman Hunt (with whom he had not previously been particularly intimate) in renting a studio at the then No. 7 Cleveland Street, Fitzroy Square, a house which stood next to the south-west corner of Howland Street, before one reaches the workhouse. It was, even then, a dismal place, the one big window of which looked to the east, and through which, when neither smoke, fog, nor rain obscured the unlovely view, you could see the damp, orange-coloured piles of timber a neighbouring dealer in that material had, within a few yards of the room, piled in monstrous heaps upon his backyard. In this forlorn quarter Rossetti began his first picture in oil that deserved the name, although, as already intimated here, certain tentative experiments in portraiture with that vehicle had exercised him with more severity than success. Nothing could be more depressing than the large gaunt chamber where the young artist executed two memorable pictures and from which posterity must perforce date the inception of Pre-Raphaelitism of the primitive and stringent, not to say hide-bound sort. Except early in the morning, nothing like that fulness of light which painters now demand was obtainable where the dingy walls, distempered of a dark maroon which dust and smoke stains had deepened, added a most undesirable gloom. The approach to it was by a half-lighted staircase up which the fuss and clatter of a boys' school kept by the landlord of the house, and too often dashed with sounds of chastisement and sorrow, frequently arose; add to these uncomely elements a dimly lighted hall, surcharged by air of which the damp of the timber yard was not the only source of its mustiness, and a shabby out-at-elbows doorway, giving access from the street that, even then, was rapidly "going down in the world." It was sliding so to say, to its present *zero* of

rag and bottle shops, penny barbers, pawnbrokers and retailers of the smallest possible capital. Such was the place where Mr. Holman Hunt, then in his twenty-first year, and Rossetti, who had not completed his second decade, met and began to work out their destinies. The former, who on that occasion left his father's house, was the master of a good deal less than a hundred pounds, being the price, or what remained of that sum, for which he had sold to a prize holder of the "Art Union,"¹ his noteworthy No. 804 in the Academy of 1848, entitled *The Flight of Madeline and Porphyro*, an illustration of Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes*. It was an excellent example which, without the least quality of Pre-Raphaelitism, attested the remarkable skill of the artist and his rare sense of the picturesque in design. He had before this time painted, besides pot-boiling portraits, two or three less ambitious works.

Rossetti was yet, apart from the studio, a member of his father's family, and, unlike his comrade, still, being so young, dependent upon his father, but resolutely devoted to art, that is to say to the expression of the poetry of his nature by means of painting, rather than in verse. It is the more to his honour that, while his facility in verse was rare, brilliant, and great, he had at this period to undergo agonies of toil and passionately to, so to say, tear himself to pieces, while he became a painter according to the lofty standards of Madox Brown, Holman Hunt, and John Millais. These, as well as other friends of his, witnessed the greatness of the struggle and honoured accordingly the

¹ This was the now deceased Mr. Charles Bridger, a well-known archæologist and antiquary, whose *Index to Printed Pedigrees* has proved the value of his services. The prize was £60 or thereabouts, for the winner being a friend of mine, I negotiated the business, but forget the exact sum in question.

² Millais, too, had exhibited at the Academy in 1846, his *Pizarro seizing the Inca of Peru*, his *Elgiva* (which he sold for £120) in 1847; his picture of *The Widow's Mite*, which, with life-size figures, was at Westminster Hall in 1849, occupied this artist in 1848, so that he exhibited nothing at the Academy in that year. There was no Pre-Raphaelitism in any of these instances, nor otherwise until the painters' contributions to the Academy of 1849 marked their adherence to the newly pronounced principles of the Brotherhood. In March of this year Rossetti's *Girlhood of Mary, Virgin* was shown at Hyde Park Corner, and by Brown, his splendid *King Lear*, which is now in the collection of Mr. Leathart, of Gateshead, and, as a powerful illustration of Pre-Raphaelitism a glory of the English School, worthy to be compared with any masterpiece of Rossetti in his riper days, with *A Huguenot*, or *The Proscribed Royalist* of Millais.

victor of that strenuous self-contest. Under these conditions, and in the studio here described Rossetti began to paint *The Girlhood of Mary, Virgin*, which is, so far as he was concerned, the first outcome of the Pre-Raphaelite views he had accepted. Whether he had adopted them under the inspiration of one or more of his friends, or, as some have supposed, had invented them, matters little. That he took an independent line in regard to art the work in question emphatically affirms; the truth seems to be that Brown's influence predominated in his studies, while the mysticism of his own mind directed him where neither the dramatic intensity of Millais and Brown, still less the stringent realism of Mr. Holman Hunt, had any power. The design was certainly made rather early in 1848, probably before going to Cleveland Street.

How independent that line of thought and art had already become, that is how entirely free from impressions due to any of those artists of power with whom he was then associated, I could not better demonstrate than by setting before the reader a very sufficient, but much reduced transcript of Rossetti's design, made in fine outlines and exquisitely drawn, to illustrate Coleridge's *Love*, and having for its text the wooing of Genevieve—

“She lean'd against the armed man,
The statue of the armed knight;
She stood and listened to my lay,
Amid the lingering light.

* * * *

“I played a soft and doleful air,
I sang an old and moving story—
An old rude song, that suited well
That ruin wild and hoary.”

If ever pencil gave the tender pathos and suggested the moving cadences of a poet's verse this lovely drawing, which has never been reproduced before, does so entirely and sympathetically. Quoting his brother's own record, a sort of diary, Mr. W. M. Rossetti tells us that “On August 28 [1848] Rossetti sat up all night, and made, from 11 p.m. till 6 a.m. an outline of Coleridge's *Genevieve*, ‘certainly the best thing I have done.’”¹ The drawing was, I believe, produced

¹ The choice instance is made in ink, with a very fine, probably crow-quill, pen, and bears, in a monogram, “G. C. D. R., August, 1848.” Not long after this the artist ceased

as the artist's contribution to a rather ambitious body calling itself "The Cyclographic Society," according to the rules of which each member

furnished a design to be placed in a portfolio with others, circulated and subjected to the criticism of all who chose to offer their opinions. The design itself was given to Mr. Coventry Patmore who, not long since, gave it to Sir E. Burne-Jones, to be exchanged for a drawing by that master himself. It now belongs to Sir Edward, who generously lent it to illustrate this sketch of his old friend's art.



Genevieve.

Rossetti's first complete Design. Lent by Sir E. Burne-Jones.

To return to *The Girlhood of Mary, Virgin*, the style, gravity, and grace of which are manifest developments of the like qualities of *Genevieve*, it is indispensable to illustrate the leading facts in its history, as the first example of Rossetti as a Pre-Raphaelite out of which naturally arises an account of the origin of the Brotherhood bearing that name. Mr. Holman Hunt has in the *Fortnightly Review* given a version of the history of the body, which, though not quite complete, is,

as far as it goes, correct. It is to the effect that some time after the two comrades settled in Cleveland Street, they encountered at Millais's

to use his name of Charles, and thenceforth adopted the style "Dante G. Rossetti," or a monogram, of which there is more than one version, comprising "D. G. R." only.

house in Gower Street, a book of engravings from frescoes in the Campo Santo of Pisa, that is to say from pictures, the purity, energy, simplicity, and poetic veracity of which served as points of crystallisation, or *nuclei* of enthusiasm for the till then somewhat nebulous ideals in art the three men severally and independently of each other possessed. Then and there, or very shortly afterwards, the friends determined to form what may be called a League of Sincerity, with loftier aims than artists generally cared for, a leading principle of which implied that each confessor should paint his best with due reference to nature, without which there could be no sincerity. There was no intention of following, much less copying the modes and moods of the artists who preceded Raphael, nor of rejecting anything which had been attained in art's service since the days of that Prince of Painters. Each friend was to work in his own way, and, if an edifying use could be made of the subject he chose for his art, so much the better, yet nothing like a didactic, religious, or moral purpose was insisted on by any Brother. The enthusiasm of Rossetti prompted the idea of forming a "Brotherhood," which in a very few days was enlarged to include James Collinson, then a painter of domestic *genre* of conspicuous ability and great promise; Thomas Woolner, a sculptor of rare gifts and prodigious skill; the present writer, who was then in training as a painter, and W. M. Rossetti, who acted as secretary to the society. In 1848 none of these men, except Collinson and Woolner, was more than twenty-one years of age. Naturally enough, Brown was solicited to become a Brother, but he, chiefly because of a crude principle which, for a time was adopted by the other painters, declined to join the society. This principle was to the effect that when a member had found a model whose aspect answered his ideas of what his subject required, that model should be painted exactly, and so to say, to a hair. Such a hide-bound rule was, of course, an absurdity, destructive of all art and hopeless. It is not to be supposed that enthusiasm for the right was the monopoly of the leading trio, or that during several years after the date in question, any one of the Brotherhood turned aside from his duty as a member. In course of time Collinson, having painted a remarkable picture to which much less respect than is due has been

awarded, and, being sorely tried by religious influences and a wavering will, openly seceded.¹

Rossetti gallantly began and carried out his beautiful though tentative *Girlhood of Mary, Virgin*, which represents Mary and her mother, St. Anne, seated at an embroidery frame in a balcony and beneath a vine whose foliage extended over a lattice, through which is a view of a landscape without the chamber. In front of the group six books are piled, each inscribed with the name of a Virtue, while near the volume stands a child-angel, who is watering a tall lily. Joseph is trimming the vine, amid the leaves of which the Holy Dove is resting in a golden halo. The lily is not only the Virgin's emblem, but serves as a model for the embroidery she is supposed to be devoutly engaged upon while her mother tenderly and gravely regards her. The sonnet Rossetti printed in the catalogue of the Free Exhibition describes her as being

"As it were
An angel-watered lily, that near God
Grows and is quiet."

This sentence sufficiently indicates the mystical and allusive mood of the painter in 1848, as well as illustrates the devout spirit which the companionship of Mr. Holman Hunt tended to strengthen while the counsel

¹ Walter Howell Deverell, a much beloved fellow-student, with artistic gifts time could surely have developed, was nominated, but not actually elected, to fill the place of Collinson. He died February 2nd, 1854, aged twenty-six. Collinson became a member of the Society of British Artists, which did not recognize Pre-Raphaelitism in any of its forms, and, being well advanced in middle life, died some years since. What Woolner was expected to do as a Brother I do not exactly know, but in Art and otherwise he lived a Knight of the Order of Sincerity, became a Royal Academician of great renown, and died October 7th, 1892. As for myself, having been stringently trained in the practice of Art, I found the experience thus won to be of great value in the profession of an Art-critic, into which "gentle craft" I gradually drifted, and so remain. In the same profession Mr. W. M. Rossetti has made a position of importance, besides that to which he holds as a *littérateur*. Ford Madox Brown, whose death occurred October 6th, 1893, left a name we all honour as that of one in the higher ranks of Art. It appears thus that of seven young men and Brothers five have attained eminent positions, four of them being pre-eminent, although for years after the society was formed no single member, whatever his position might be, escaped insult, obloquy, and wicked and malicious misrepresentation. The more conspicuous the Brother was the more outrageously was he attacked.

of that artist and Madox Brown helped materially the execution of the picture which, apart from its prodigious merits and simply as the first work of a painter whose training had been both brief and interrupted, I never cease to look upon with indescribable wonder. A little flat and gray, and rather thin in painting, it is most carefully drawn and soundly modelled, rich in good and pure colouring; and in the brooding, dreamy pathos, full of reverence and yet unconscious of "the time to come," which the Virgin's still and chaste face expresses, there is a vein of poetry, the freshest and most profound. Rossetti had no difficulty in finding models whose aspects he could delineate without scruple as fittest for his purpose; his sister Christina sat for the Virgin, his mother for St. Anne. The Child-angel was painted from a younger sister of Mr. Woolner, whose features did, perhaps, require a little modification. The artist's descriptive sonnet, above quoted, continued with the account of the Virgin's girlhood, which lasted

"Till one dawn, at home,
She woke in her white bed, and had no fear
At all, yet wept till sunshine, and felt awed;
Because the fulness of the time was come."

This passage distinctly points to the next picture of Rossetti, the supremely beautiful *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* for the *Ancilla* in which the artist's sister again sat, and which again illustrates the brooding, dreamy pathos of the painter's mystical mood, as well as the virginal charm of the lady who sat for its principal figure and face, a charm to which *The Girlhood of Mary, Virgin*, as well as the *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* manifestly owe much, if it was not actually the prompting *raison d'être* of both the works. There is an excellent reproduction of the latter in the *Portfolio* for 1888, with an illustrative note by the present writer.¹

On that occasion it was said that this small picture on panel—it measures only twenty-eight by sixteen inches—is the one perfect outcome of the original motive of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood by its representative and typical member. It is not correct, nor would

¹ It was priced at the gallery at £80, and sold, I believe, to the Marchioness of Bath for that price. It now belongs to her daughter, the Lady Louisa Feilding, who lent it, as No. 286, to the Academy in 1883. There is an amusing note on the selling of this picture in the *Art Journal*, 1884, p. 150.



Ecce Ancilla Domini!

it be just to say more of his influence on that much misrepresented company than admits his leadership in regard to the pathetic expression of a religious ideal. Each of the three distinguished painters whom the world now recognizes (at the time *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* was in hand James Collinson had to be reckoned with), so completely followed his own devices, that after a year or two, Rossetti was Rossetti alone, and hardly any traces of his genius are to be found except on his own canvases. Millais, at least, gave the painter some help in working out the highly spiritualised ideal, which may be described as follows. In a chamber, whose pure white sides and floor exhibit an intensity of soft morning light, the couch of Mary, itself almost entirely white, is placed close to the wall where dawn would strike its earliest rays, and with its head towards the window. A scanty blue curtain shaded the face of the sleeper; behind, attached to the wall, a lamp (such as in antique chambers was rarely extinguished, and supposed efficacious against evil spirits) is still alight, although it is broad day without, and the sun reveals the tree growing close to the opening. At the foot of the couch, Mary's embroidery frame, with a lily unfinished on the bright red cloth which was the sole piece of strong colour in the picture, bespeaks one of those domestic occupations painters have agreed to ascribe to the Maiden Mother. As the subjective incident of the work is the Annunciation, Rossetti intends us to suppose that the Virgin was aroused from sleep, if not from prayer, when the gentlest of the archangels appeared, the light of Heaven filled the room, and the words "*Ecce Ancilla Domini!*" were uttered by Mary in submission to her lot; for it is manifest that *The Girlhood of Mary, Virgin*, was intended to show her in a state of mystical pre-cognition, as became the sequence of the subjects.

How original were the views of Rossetti in respect to the treatment of this wonderfully difficult theme will appear when we remember how other masters had treated it. The Virgins Annunciate of Angelico, Memmi, Taddeo Bartoli, Fra Bartolommeo and others, were, as the *Portfolio* has already pointed out, generally handsomely clad, if not crowned and jewelled, and most of them are enthroned under arched canopies, adorned with sculptures. The Flemings and Germans went beyond this, and expended all the resources of their skill on Mary's

brocade, precious stones, goldsmithery, and even the illuminations of the sumptuous breviary they bestowed upon her. Rossetti gave her no ornaments, except the gilded nimbus, which, as in other pictures, glows round her hair and was kindled as the angel spoke. She is covered from head to foot-heel by a simple robe of lawn, leaving her arms bare, and her dark auburn tresses fall on her shoulders, and, like the contour of her bust and limbs, have not the amplitude of womanhood. It suited Rossetti's views of his subject that the Virgin, who is almost girlish in her slenderness, should have but lately passed out of the adolescent state into a riper one. Fra Angelico, whose designs of the *Rosa Mystica* are the chastest and most original of all, witness the lovely *Annunciation* of St. Marco's convent and that other which Sir F. Burton has lately acquired for the National Gallery, never produced a maiden more passionless than this; her earnest and reverent eyes brood, not without knowledge of the pain to come (a point which had been made of yore), upon the meaning of Gabriel's salutation; while awestruck, but not overpowered, she shrinks against the wall, whose whiteness differentiates the candour of her raiment, and contrasts with the lustrous aureole of metallic gold which incloses the dark warmth of her tresses—the unbound condition of which has, of course, a meaning all readers recognize in relation to the Dove which, as in all early pictures of the *Annunciation*, descends from above, hovers towards Mary, and is indicated by the declaration of the Angelic harbinger. Nearly all the more ancient pictures of the Italian, German, and Low Country Schools, not less than cognate sculptured representations of this subject, give magnificent if not royal habiliments—sometimes even (as if the gentle Gabriel were the warlike Michael) archangelic coronets, armour, and weapons to the harbinger of Heaven when appearing to Mary. He is usually winged, and his vast pinions, glittering in gold, azure and vermillion, and *semée* with stars, reach from his superb tiara to the floor. A stupendous design by Holbein gives a Gabriel all glorious to behold, with pinions such as we seem to hear rustling; while in a voice mighty but subdued, he, robed like the Kaiser and grasping the sceptre of his Archangelhood, delivers his message to a round-eyed and plump Jungfrau very different from Rossetti's, while the fattest of doves appears between the imperial angel and the ponderous maiden. These

figures indicate a motive quite other than that here in question, in which the stalwart, wingless harbinger, who is simply clad in white from radiant head to fiery feet, and holds the lily—an emblem and a sceptre in one—which it is his duty to deliver to Mary, approaches her with a calm and passionless face, which assorts with his noble, unmoved, and undemonstrative air, as he stands erect, and—unlike the Gabriels of Angelico, Memmi, Dürer, Del Sarto, Raphael, Giovanni Santi, Tintoret and Rembrandt—makes no obeisance to Mary, not yet crowned Queen of Heaven. In Tintoret's picture Gabriel rushes into the stately chamber of the Virgin as if on the wings of a whirlwind, and a host of angels follow him to witness the event. There is a second superb design of Holbein (now in the collection of Mr. Fisher of Midhurst) in which the grand angel, with a world of draperies flying in his haste, enters before the kneeling and tremulous Virgin, while his sword-like pinions are fully displayed as he grasps a long sceptre with one hand, and, with the other extended in a minatory way, speaks as in a voice of thunder.

This picture was begun and finished in the squalid Cleveland Street studio. The face of Mary was a just and true likeness of Rossetti's sister, and was painted with hardly any alteration of her features or expression. The face of Gabriel was mostly founded on that of Woolner, whose hair supplied the characteristic form and colour of the archangel's. The nimbus of the archangel is proper to Rossetti's masterpiece like the other emblematic lustres of the design, while there is special significance in the fiery feet of the Messenger of God. The idea of the Annunciation as a mystery, thus illustrated by the namesake of the Harbinger is imperfectly appreciated without recognition of the character of the fire streaming from the feet of the Messenger of Peace as he approached the earth.

While—not without struggles and efforts innumerable and gallant, for Rossetti's technique was, in 1849, in a somewhat uncertain and tentative condition—this picture was in progress, the *Germ* was concocted and put forth. The first number of that amazing publication appeared on "Magazine Day" of December, 1849. The last number (4) was issued soon after he wrote on *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* the date, March, 1850. In this year the picture was No. 225 in the Portland

Gallery, 316 Regent Street, to which place the tenants of the Hyde Park Gallery had removed their exhibition. *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* was priced in the catalogue at £50. It was returned unsold and remained on the painter's easel till January 1853, when Mr. McCracken, a packing agent of Belfast, who, Mr. W. Rossetti tells us, had never seen the picture, bought it for the original price; after his death it changed hands more than once, including those of Mr. Heugh, with whose collection it was in 1874 sold; for £388 10s. it passed to the collection of Mr. William Graham, who soon after Rossetti's death lent it to the Academy Winter Exhibition of 1883; at his sale in 1886 it was bought (price £840) for the National Gallery out of a fund bequeathed by the late Mr. John Lucas Walker. It is now No. 1210 in the Gallery.¹ It has been etched not quite successfully by M. Gaujean.

Simultaneously with the execution of *The Girlhood of Mary, Virgin*, and in the same dismal Cleveland Street studio above described, Mr. Holman Hunt painted his famous *Death of Rienzi's Brother*, which only concerns us here because, in the rather grotesque (a term I use not depreciatingly) face of Rienzi vowing to be revenged on the boy's murderers, we have that which is by much the truest portrait of D. G. Rossetti as he appeared at that time. The pallor of his carnations was exaggerated and made more adust to suit the passion of the incident; but the large, dark eyes, strongly marked dark eyebrows, bold, dome-like forehead, the abundant long and curling hair falling on each side of the face, and especially the full red lips conspicuous in the picture are, or rather were, of Rossetti to the life. This fine and important painting having deteriorated in a deplorable manner, has been so much retouched as to have parted with nine-tenths of its historical and artistic value. Not long before it was completed Madox Brown painted a much less startling version of Rossetti's head in his

¹ Here is Rossetti's opinion of his own work as communicated to Mr. W. Bell Scott in a letter dated "Kelmescott, June 17th, 1874. My dear Scotus,—A little early thing of my own, *Annunciation* [this title the painter preferred for his picture when he sold it to Mr. McCracken], painted when I was twenty-one—sold to Agnew at Christie's the other day (to my vast surprise) for nearly £400. Graham has since bought it of Agnew, and has sent it to me for possible revision, but it is best left alone, except just for a touch or two. Indeed my impression on seeing it was that I couldn't do quite so well now!"

picture of *Chaucer reading the Legend of Custance to Edward III.*, and to the present writer described his doing so in a letter¹ dated November 21st, 1882.

The latter part of the year 1849 was not only signalised in the manner above stated, but by the inception of and preparation for the publication of the *Germ*. With W. M. Rossetti for the editor the first number comprised of Dante Rossetti's writing "Songs of Our Household, No. 1," a poem, and the first version of "Hand and Soul," a prose romance in which it is impossible to avoid recognising the *quasi*-nuptial and deeply devout motives of *The Girlhood of Mary, Virgin*, and *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* as they clothed themselves anew in words. They are both the prototypes of those legions of poems and novelettes of which the prose and verse romances of Mr. William Morris are the most fortunate examples.²

¹ Here is part of the letter in question: "The *Chaucer* was exhibited at the Royal Academy. 50 [No. 380, 1851], at Liverpool, where it won the £50 prize, in 1859; at my own exhibition [in 1865, in Pall Mall], and bought for the public gallery at Sydney, N.S.W. When at Liverpool it belonged to David Thomas White, who wished to cut it up (!); so I got it back from him in exchange for smaller work. Deverell, as you rightly remember, sat for the page [sitting in front, an admirable likeness of our dear boy-friend]; W. M. Rossetti, who then had his hair [*i.e.* previous to his becoming bald], for the troubadour; John Marshall, the great surgeon, sat for the jester. I remember his mother's and sister's surprise! D. G. Rossetti sat for Chaucer himself, and was the very image of Occleve's little portrait. I began the head of Chaucer (Rossetti and I both at the top of a high scaffolding [in a large studio at No. 17 Newman Street, where Rossetti worked under Brown, as before stated], he reading to me), at 11 P.M., and finished it by 4 A.M. next morning; when daylight came it looked all right, so I never touched it again."

² *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, a sort of reflection of the *Germ*, published a few years later, abounds in proofs of Rossetti's influence on Messrs. Morris and his *entourage*. The first number of the *Germ* contained, besides the above, in "The Seasons," a lovely lyric by Mr. Coventry Patmore; Miss Christina Rossetti's versed dirge, called "Dream Land," as well as "An End" by the same; a sonnet and a review by her younger brother; a delightfully fresh "Sketch from Nature," by John L. Tupper, and Woolner's "My Beautiful Lady." In "Hand and Soul" it is easy for his intimates to recognise the outpourings, protests, and introspective lamentations, the doubts, self-fears, and partial despair of his future of the author himself, then struggling with himself to attain means and powers sufficient for his devotion, his hopes, and his ambition. In No. 2 of the *Germ* we find the first version of "The Blessed Damosel," a poem which in after years supplied a theme and subject for one of Rossetti's most important pictures. In No. 3 he contributed "The Carillon," one of the fruits of a journey to Paris and the

It is time to set forth the prodigious influence exercised in 1841 and later by the then hardly recognized poetry of Robert Browning upon Rossetti and the more imaginative members of that circle of which he had already become the leader. This could not be better illustrated than



The Laboratory.

by the cut which, thanks to the courtesy of Mr. Fairfax Murray, is now before us and entitled *The Laboratory*,¹ of which the story is that a

Low Countries, and "From the Cliffs," a poem. In No. 4 his contributions were "Pax Vobis," and "Six Sonnets for Pictures" in the Louvre and Luxembourg at Paris, and in the Academy at Bruges.

¹ The subject for this work Rossetti appears to have found during abundant reading at the British Museum, which, among other results, led to his introducing himself to the author of *Paracelsus* and *Sordello*, by means of a letter expressing the highest admiration and keenest appreciation for that poet's works, then collected under the title of *Bells and Pomegranates*. "The Laboratory" originally appeared in *Hood's Magazine* in 1844, and was reprinted in No. VII. of *Bells and Pomegranates*, 1845, where, no doubt, Rossetti first

Court-lady of the *ancien régime*, who had been jilted, and become maddened by love and furiously jealous of a fairer rival, visited in his "devil's smithy" a lean old chemist and poison-monger like the apothecary in *Romeo and Juliet*, and by the gift of all her jewels, nay, the kisses of her mouth, bribed that gaunt villain to concoct a "drop."

When he had finished the dire compound, she cried to him as in the picture

"Is it done? Take my mask off! Nay, be not morose,
It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close:
The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's fee—
If it hurts her; beside, can it ever hurt me?"

The original of this cut is noteworthy as the first of Rossetti's completed works in water-colours, materials which he had not, except tentatively, till then employed, and because it has such a bold and original design, and is painted in such brilliant and strong colours that no one can regard it without surprise. Apart from the voluptuous suggestiveness—which was quite new from Rossetti—of the design, the snake-like virulence of the lady's face, the deadly passion of her clenched hand, the eager wrath of her sudden uprising, the lovely brilliance of her carnations—a little paled by rage and envy, the sumptuousness of her bust, and the vivid coloration of this striking little work attest the development of the artist in a way his biographers have failed to observe, although these

met with it and numerous other pieces which he and all his company took the highest delight in reading, and in assimilating to their hearts' content the "scraps of thund'rous epic lilted out" by the painter-poet. It was with regard to poems of Browning's that, at the time in view here, Rossetti chiefly exercised his unrivalled power of reading aloud and the gigantic resources of his memory. Nearly all the P-R.B., except perhaps Collinson, were sympathetic adepts in reading aloud, but none of them approached Rossetti, whose musical, modulated, and sonorous voice still rings in the ears of those who remember with what vigour, spirit, and poetic appreciation the dear comrade of those days took his part in reading thus. As to his memory of poems, that seemed inexhaustible, when nothing was missed in the recital of a *Lay of Ancient Rome*, a longish poem of Tennyson, sections of Henry Taylor's *Philip van Artevelde*, sequences of a dozen pages each from *Paracelsus* or *Sordello*, passages of Dante and other Italians faultlessly quoted, and other poetic jewellery borrowed from Leigh Hunt, Landor, Wordsworth, Chaucer, and Spenser, and stored in the prodigious mind of the poet who recited them, and was destined to add to the wonders of English verse such treasures as *Sister Helen*, *Jenny*, and *The Burthen of Nineveh*. All his life Rossetti was great in reading and reciting aloud, and continued the practices to the last.

elements are noteworthy in the highest degree. They mark the opening of his second period, they excel in movement as in ardour of all kinds, remind us of Madox Brown, his true master, and, as it appears to me,



Pages Quarrelling.

owe much to what the designer had learnt during a visit made in the autumn of 1849 to Paris and the Low Countries, part of the outcome of which were the sonnets published in the *Germ* of 1850, that with rare poetic force and skill commented on several masterpieces of old art which Rossetti had studied in the Louvre and at Bruges.¹

The Laboratory distinctly reflects the intense illuminations and pure colour of Memlinc's and Giorgione's (so-called) pictures at those places, to which the painter had addressed the sonnets of 1849. In the early part of the next year, he, by way of continuing his share in the *Germ*, wrote a tale of unhappy love intended for the fifth, or April number thereof, but which never appeared, although Millais etched his first plate to

illustrate Rossetti's text with the design of a lady dying while sitting for her portrait. Neither the tale, which was called *St. Agnes of Intercession*, nor the etching was finished, and the latter is now one of the

¹ Although it is in many respects the most important of Rossetti's illustrations to Browning, *The Laboratory* is not the first of them. Previous to this he had begun in pen and ink a very elaborate and characteristic illustration to *Pippa Passes*, in three compartments, the central one of which, representing "*Hist!*" said *Kate the Queen*, seems to have gone astray. The part particularized was the original of a water-colour drawing lent by Mrs. Spring Rice, as No. 12, to the Burlington Club in 1883, and of a portion of an unfinished picture in oil, called *The Two Mothers*, which Mr. Hutton lent to the same exhibition. About 1852 Rossetti drew in ink, and gave as a keepsake to the present writer, *Taurello's first Sight of Fortune*, Burlington Club, No. 21, where it was wrongly dated "C. 1848." This work derives its origin from *Sordello*, and is the sole illustration to that poem; it was designed to commemorate the giver's and the receiver's ardent studies anent "*Sordello's delicate spirit all unstrung.*"

scarcest of its kind. Rossetti, too, began an etching to illustrate his own narrative, but it was soon put aside. It was about this time, or a little later, that, wanting to improve his knowledge of perspective, a subject of the Royal Academy curriculum to which he had never addressed himself, he came to me to be helped in that respect. That he was a perfectly intelligent, but not a very diligent learner is shown by the rough sketch of two medieval pages quarrelling here reproduced from among a score of such remaining on sheets of his exercises in the little science. Assuming the airs of a teacher, I had complained that he neglected his work. His reply was this sketch, intended to show what I should incur by continuing to grumble. The oblique lines athwart the feet of the figures are parts of the diagram.¹

Still later, but of the same period, is the profile portrait of himself, drawn with a pen, and here reduced from a sketch which Rossetti gave to our friend Arthur Hughes, whose picture of *April Love* is one



D. G. Rossetti.

¹ Rossetti had so much humour that he cared little who, if good-naturedly, caricatured him, and he often sketched himself in odd circumstances and conditions. One of these sketches, made in 1849, lies before me now, and is ludicrously like in all its exaggerations of a huge head clothed by masses of dark, unkempt, curling hair, and inclosing gaunt features, a short beard and moustache, large, hollow and "detached"-looking eyes; the head is set upon sloping shoulders rounded by a slight habitual stoop, and carried forward in an eager sort of way, which is true to the life; the chest is narrow, the hips are wide. The artist's attire is the above-mentioned long-tailed dress coat, a loose dress waistcoat, and loose trousers. The sketch attests Rossetti's manner of gripping with his half-clenched fingers the cuff of his coat—a spasmodic habit which was highly characteristic of his nervous, self-concentrated temperament. Much the best description of Rossetti at this period is Mr. Holman Hunt's account of himself and "The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood," printed in the *Contemporary Review*, vol. xlix., p. 737; the best portrait of him, apart from the

of the most tender-hearted and subtle love-poems in the world, an idyl of ineffable pathos and sweetness.

In 1850 Rossetti completed the famous drawing in ink with a pen, entitled *Hesterna Rosa*, which illustrates the song, pregnant of sorrow and shame, of Elena, the mistress of Philip van Artevelde, in Sir Henry Taylor's noble drama. The motto of *Hesterna Rosa* is :—

“Quoth tongue of neither maid nor wife
To heart of neither wife nor maid,
‘Lead we not here a jolly life
Betwixt the shine and shade?’

“Quoth heart of neither maid nor wife
To tongue of neither wife nor maid,
‘Thou wag’st, but I am worn with strife,
And feel like flowers that fade!’”

The scene is a tent pitched in a pleasaunce and, though a pallid dawn gathers force among the trees, still lit by lamps from within, so that the gaunt and ghostlike shadows of a party of revellers seated in front of the design flicker and start ominously upon the canvas walls. One gambler is seated on a couch and throwing dice upon a stool placed before the group, while his companion kneels opposite and, with a goat-like action, draws between his lips the finger of his mistress, the singer, and *Hesterna Rosa* of the design, who, half hiding her face with her disengaged hand, sits behind him. He is waiting the cast of his companion's dice and will, in turn, throw his own dice upon the stool. Another girl, the mistress of the former, sits above him on the couch, and while she seems to be chanting a merry, perhaps ribald, song, has thrown her bare and beautiful arms about his neck. Near them, on our left, is a young girl holding to her ear, as if to catch the lowest throbbing of its notes, a sort of lute, while on the other side is a huge ape, grossly scratching himself, and thus intended to repeat the sensual half of the *motif* of the design, just as the lute-player repeats the sadder, less degraded pathos of the other half.

already-mentioned and somewhat exaggerated head of Rienzi, is that of the guest, who in Millais' *Lorenzo ana Isabella* is drinking from a wine-glass; here the pallor of the sitter's face is overdone, but the likeness is otherwise perfect. Mr. W. M. Rossetti sat for Lorenzo in this picture.

CHAPTER II

1851—1861

IN 1851 we find Rossetti removed to a studio on the first floor at No. 72, Newman Street, and in his art likewise removed from those hide-binding influences which inexperience forced upon him in Cleveland Street. The *Germ* having changed its name with the third number to *Art and Poetry*, had come to an end, and with it the central point, so to say, of our subject's life had shifted from the religious and mystical purposes of his first period to those intensely dramatic and romantic, and sometimes voluptuous, impulses which *The Laboratory* heralded and illustrated. The last-named year produced, besides smaller examples of less account, a fine and masculine drawing in ink, now the property of Mr. Coventry Patmore and called *The Parable of Love*, where a lady sits at an easel painting her own portrait, while her lover, stooping over her, guides her hand with his own. The motives and style of this example, which has never been engraved or copied, have even more fibre than those of *The Laboratory*. The lover is a portrait of Woolner. To be grouped with it is Mr. Boyce's brilliant and powerful drawing in water colours, called *Borgia*, for which the design in ink dates in 1850. This little piece measures only $9\frac{1}{2} \times 10$ inches, but it has that largeness of style we appreciate highly in an old master, and a brilliant and powerful coloration as well as vivid and finely harmonised colours proper, especially a rich amber and a strong black, which latter is thus, for the first time, found in Rossetti's work, and a potent element in the well conceived chiaroscuro of the whole. Lucrezia Borgia is seated on a couch playing on a lute to the sound of which a boy and a girl are dancing with wonderful spirit and energy ; behind the sumptuously developed and splendidly clad dame sit the infamous Pope Alexander VI. and her brother Cæsar. The latter is blowing the rose-petals from amid the labyrinth of his sister's hair,

gazing eagerly at her, and with his dagger beating time to the music upon a half-filled wineglass at his side. Belonging to the same group as *Borgia*, and the property of the same distinguished water-colour painter and friend of Rossetti, is the original drawing in ink with a pen, styled *How they Met Themselves*, an impressive illustration of the ancient German legends anent the *Döppelgänger*, which is here reproduced from one of the two water-colour versions, painted in 1864. It is now in the possession of Mr. Pepys Cockerell, and was developed from the original.

Two lovers are walking in a twilight wood when they are suddenly confronted by their own apparitions portending death; she sinking to the earth, stretches out her arms as if appealing for mercy, while he, bolder but overawed, lays his hand upon his sword. Dramatic as it is, this design is not so virile and pathetic as the original drawing. *Giotto Painting the Portrait of Dante* is the most vigorous and apt example of 1852, and with an extraordinary sense of style and largeness in design represents the great Florentine master whom (because of the majestic simplicity of his motives and compositions) of all the old painters Rossetti most affected, sitting on a scaffold erected before a wall in the Bargello at Florence and in the act of painting that likeness of Dante, which, having been discovered by Mr. Kirkup in 1839, is still visible there. The austere poet is placed in a chair, with his knees crossed; he holds a pomegranate and maintains a dreamy, self-absorbed expression; Cimabue stands near Giotto and looks at his fellow painter's work; Guido Cavalcanti is behind his fellow poet; below, upon the pavement of the chapel, we see Beatrice in a procession of worshippers. This picture is in water colours and has all the freshness and brightness, with some of the dryness, of a fresco. The text of Dante's *Purgatorio*, c. xi. beginning

"Credette Cimabue nella pintura
Tener lo campo,"—

is most aptly illustrated by this noble design.¹

¹ A sketch for it was shown, a most exceptional circumstance with regard to a Rossetti, as No. 7, in a "Winter Exhibition of Drawings and Sketches at 121 Pall Mall, 1852"; with it were his *Beatrice meeting Dante at a Marriage Feast* (196), and *A Sketch for a Portrait in Venetian Costume* (20). It appears that Rossetti's offered contributions



How they Met themselves.

It is certain that prices for Rossetti's pictures did not at this time "rule high." On the contrary we learn that in April, 1853, Mr. McCracken of Belfast, our painter's staunch admirer, gave him the sum of £35 for the masterpiece called *Dante on the Anniversary of Beatrice's Death*, of which a plate from the water colour drawing in the late Mrs. Combe's collection, recently given to the University of Oxford, is now before the reader.

The print shows the motives, design, and composition of the picture, but no reproduction in black and white can give an adequate idea of its subtlety, brilliancy, and colour. The subject was thus quoted by Rossetti himself from Dante's *Vita Nuova*, a mine of mystical, introspective and suggestive matter to which at this time the painter, more than before or since, devoted his attention with great energy.¹ His ideal mistress being dead, Dante wrote, "On that day which completed the year since my lady had been made [one] of the citizens of Eternal Life, I was sitting in a place apart, where, remembering me of her, I was drawing an angel upon certain tablets, and as I drew, I turned my eyes and saw beside me persons to whom it was fitting to do honour, and who were looking at what I did: and, according as it was told to me afterwards, they had been there a while before I perceived them. Observing whom, I rose for salutation and said, 'Another was present with me.' " In the design Dante is kneeling before a window opening above the Arno and Florence, and upon the sill of which stand bottles of pigments for painting, likewise a significant pomegranate, while, beneath the sill, lies with other things the quaint lute alluded to in the previous note upon "Hesterna Rosa." Dante—his attention being called from his task by the officious friend who introduced "certain people of importance" his visitors,—the impression of sorrowful thought still lingering in his eyes,—turns to look at the latter, who are an elderly magnate and his fair, tall and stately daughter. The father's action indicates that he would fain check the intrusive action of the busybody, while the lady, one

to a preceding exhibition of the same series, which was held in 1851 at the gallery of the Old Water-Colour Society, had been, as he said, "kicked out of the precious place in Pall Mall."

¹ Browning, too, in his "One Word More," published in *Men and Women*, 1855, ii. 229, sympathetically treated this subject.



Water-Colour 26 x 34

Scene on the Anniversary of Beatrice's Death.

By Rossetti, 1850

of her hands clasping the senior's hand, thus expresses her sympathy with the sorrow of Dante and her tender regret that he has been disturbed. Among the objects within the room are an hour-glass with its sand more than half run down, a flowering lily stem, a convex mirror (the existence of which at this time is challengeable), a votive picture of the Virgin and Child, and round the wall, a row of the heads of cherubs who, like

"Carvèd angels, ever eager-eyed,
Stared, where upon their heads the cornice rests,
With hair blown back, and wings put cross-wise on their breasts."

Outside the chamber and beyond the half-withdrawn *portière* we see a closet with a brass cistern suspended over a basin for washing hands, one of those quite "impracticable" staircases which, as with his musical instruments, were the despair of the specialists, and, farther off, a serene landscape, comprising a sunlit meadow, a shadowy wood, and, overhead, that brooding, softly-glowing firmament, which, with Rossetti as with other poet-painters, attests the perfect peace of a Paradise beyond the grave. In this way the artist took us from the busy Arno, past the dim, half-lighted room where Dante sojourned with his grief, and through the narrow pass of Death, whose purifying function is indicated by the basin and its appurtenances, until, remote but bright, the pleasaunce of Eternity is discovered to be "beyond the veil," which is represented by the *portière*.

As in the picture before us, the often-mentioned Miss Elizabeth Eleanor Siddall, who afterwards became Mrs. Dante G. Rossetti, appears for the first time in the figure of the compassionate lady, a few lines concerning her may be acceptable. Some time late in 1850 Walter Deverell, going with his mother to a then renowned bonnet-maker's "establishment" in Cranbourne Street (then called an "alley"), and being dreadfully bored while the lady discussed a new purchase with the principal, happened in his boyish and restless mood to glance wearily along the counter to where, in the background of the shop, a group of assistants could be seen diligently building head-gear of the latest *mode*. Among these damsels sat one conspicuous by a rare sort of comeliness, tall, elegant, lithe, slim-waisted, not exuberant nor otherwise of the order

Rossetti afterwards affected, as in the *Venus Verticordia* and other sumptuous visions to which we shall come presently, but precisely of the type we recognize in the compassionate visitor of Dante. Her abundant hair was of a darkish auburn-brown, with golden threads entwined, and bound compactly about her rather small and well-shaped head, which nature poised in graceful ease upon a "neck like a tower," as Rossetti said about that royal charm of one of the beauties his fancy had created. Her carnations, "rather pale than wan," were not without freckles Deverell at a distance did not see, but, under these spots of the sun, her fine skin was even-tinted and smooth, while her features were as choicely modelled as those of an Italian *cinque-cento* bronze of the purest kind. In a moment "our dear boy," as all his friends called Deverell, was on fire to paint this strangely found beauty as Viola in a picture of *Twelfth Night* he had in hand, and for whom the model must needs be filled with an inward and spiritual grace and modesty. For Walter to ask was to command his mother, and that lady exerted herself so successfully with the bonnet-maker, the damsel, and her father—who was a watchmaker originally from Sheffield and then settled somewhere in the Newington Butts region—that the desired sittings were granted to Deverell, who, poor fellow, dying young, never did the maiden justice, nor quite carried out his meaning in the picture. Soon after this Rossetti persuaded Miss Siddall to sit to him in turn, and thus began a close relationship, including Rossetti's falling in love with his model, their engagement in or about 1853, and his marrying her in May, 1860. Her death, in lamentable circumstances and some time after childbearing, occurred through an over-dose of laudanum, inadvertently taken to relieve the agonies of neuralgia. This pain was a symptom of that phthisis which had long threatened the life of the ill-starred Mrs. D. G. Rossetti. Here reproduced is a sketch of her, made by her husband at a later date (? c. 1859) than that to which we have arrived, and now the property of Mr. Fairfax Murray, who kindly lent the original for reproduction. Naturally, Rossetti made countless sketches and studies from his wife, and not seldom included her in his pictures, as in *Regina Cordium*, 1861. Several of these examples were at the Burlington Club, 1883; many more at the Rossetti sale at Christie's, May 12, 1883.

One of the most interesting pictures produced, or rather left incom-

plete, by Rossetti is that to which the progress of time and this narrative brings us with the year 1853. It is a work anent which, more than any other by our master, numerous erroneous statements have been made, and yet, *Found*, of the original pen drawing in ink of which, thanks to Mr. Fairfax Murray, the reader has a capital reproduction, is a noteworthy instance of Rossetti having for the nonce departed out of his then accustomed pietistic and romantic moods and entered upon a moral and modern application of design.

Although an entirely original work, and, in the touching, simple and veracious nature of its theme, far superior to Mr. Holman Hunt's somewhat analogous production, *The Awakening Conscience*, which preceded it before the public, it is difficult to avoid thinking that the moving and terrible story of the latter work had not much to do with turning Rossetti's attention to, and insuring his sympathy for unhappy women of the class with the fate of whom both these pictures are concerned. Rossetti must have seen it, and could not but be deeply touched. The theme, as well as the intensely realistic treatment of *Found* are completely



The Artist's Wife.

"Huntee" and remote from Rossetti's mood, which was, if the truth be said, rather over-scornful of didactic art, and thoroughly indisposed towards attempts to ameliorate anybody's condition by means of pictures.

The incident Rossetti imagined follows, as it were, in a natural sequence that of Mr. Hunt's invention. The latter implied a seduced woman in the house of her seducer; the former shows her deserted, expelled, and, whether self-wrecked or not, a wanderer in the streets of London, while we may suppose the grim Nemesis of her sex was leading

her towards a veritable Bridge of Sighs, where it was but too likely the fate of Hood's

"One more unfortunate,
Even God's providence
Seeming estranged,"

awaited her. The time was soon after the chilly silvery dawn had dispersed the gloom which concealed the victim, and there was light enough to reveal her form to the young countryman, who, driving townwards to market, no sooner saw the still fair face set in pale golden hair than he recognized the once pure maiden, formerly his betrothed, who, years before, had left his village and was lost in London. Leaping from the cart he seized the girl's hands and held her firmly, while shrinking to the ground, she struggled and turned her face away in vain. Beyond this the design tells its own story and we may leave it so, adding, however, that it illustrates the motto "I remember thee ; the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy betrothal," *Jerem. ii. 2*, with which it is inscribed. Rossetti's original idea is expressed in the drawing now before us and some time in 1854 he, having made studies for parts of it, seems to have begun, or intended to begin, the work on the canvas. Several of the studies, squared for transferring, were included in the painter's sale. He did not get very far with the picture, the stringency of naturalistic painting not suiting his mood nor his experience. It was taken up at intervals of years, was commissioned by Mr. Leathart of Gateshead, but, not advancing, never reached that gentleman's hands ; was revived in 1870, again in 1880, and commissioned again by Mr. W. Graham. As it happened, although part of the background was, after Rossetti's death, put in by another hand, *Found* was never finished as the painter meant it should have been. Despite some disproportions, questionable perspective and inequalities of details, it remains a masterpiece of poetry with exquisite parts. It is hardly needful to point out to those who have observed the allusive wealth of incidents in *Dante on the Anniversary of Beatrice's Death*, that *Found* abounds in similar details. Among these are that the girl crouches against the wall of a churchyard—"where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest"; that the brightening dawn symbolizes, as it may be, peace (with forgiveness) on earth, or in



G. G. Rossetti pinx.

Walter L. Colls. Phoe.

Found.

Heaven, after sorrow; while the calf trammelled in the net, and, helpless, carried in the cart to its death, points to the past and present life of the girl. This allusion is the least happy of Rossetti's "moralities," because, unlike the harmless beast, the woman had betrayed every one—father, mother, brother, and even the lover who had trusted her.¹

Rossetti, who was in fairly good health at the time in question, and depressed rather than permanently defeated by the fate of *Found*, now for a while continued to design and paint in water colours, inventing his own subjects entirely, or, when older themes were adopted, giving them the new life and light of the genius which informed them with fresh fire, and left little but the title which was not his own. These themes were mostly romantic and dashed with mysticism, and they frequently referred to legends of the Arthurian cycle, the too-often dry bones and rickety whimsicalities of which Rossetti never failed to vivify, while he glorified them with light and colour. Apart from them,—and yet not quite distinct from the romantic class proper as to their poetic motives and technical treatment,—is a fine series derived from Dante, which occupied Rossetti during 1854 and 1855. Of this number the triptych of *Paolo and Francesca*, which Mr. Ruskin coveted intensely and bought, is to be reckoned. As it resembles a later version of the same subject, dated 1862, and introduced in this text, it is expedient to pass on to *The Passover in the Holy Family*, now at Oxford, the gift of the author of *Modern Painters*, which represents the porch of the house

¹ It is believed that the difficulties attending the completion of *Found* in the oil medium (with which he was then temporarily less accustomed to deal), and the sharp disappointment attending those difficulties, had a good deal to do with the changes of his mood and that "detachedness" which grew upon him from this time. Engaged to marry Miss Siddall, and deeply in love with her, he could not but suffer while her health was frequently broken. When the time for their wedding approached, in May, 1860, Rossetti caused the wall between Nos. 14 and 13 in Chatham Place to be broken through, and thenceforth he occupied, as in a modern flat, the second-floors in both houses. There, in February, 1862, after a very brief period of wedded union, his wife died, after which he remained no longer than, with an interval of lodging in Lincoln's Inn Fields, sufficed to secure the mansion called Tudor House, No. 16, Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, where he settled in October, 1862, and where all his later pictures that were painted in London were executed, and of which he remained the tenant till his death. It may be added that one of the best likenesses of Miss Siddall is the face of Sylvia in Mr. Holman Hunt's *Valentine Rescuing Sylvia*, painted in 1850-51.

of Joseph, as Rossetti conceived it, with Zacharias sprinkling the door-posts with symbolical blood held in a bowl by the boy Jesus, while, stooping at the feet of the latter, St. John is, according to his own declaration, fastening the shoe-latchet of the Saviour. "And Mary culls the bitter herbs ordained." Although never quite finished, this is a very pure, delicate and brilliant piece, with motives at once reverent and tender, and as Mr. Ruskin noticed, exceptionally realistic in treatment. Probably efforts made with regard to *Found* had influenced the artist to follow nature in this respect. There appears (the accounts are very confusing) to be more than one version of this example; the subject Rossetti described in one of his "Sonnets for Pictures," *Poems*, 1870, p. 266. The design, combining mysticism with types prophetic, is truly in the artist's characteristic vein. After this came the very different *Lancelot and Guinevere at the Tomb of Arthur*, a brilliant study of sunlight in an apple orchard, where, under the fruit-laden trees (here introduced significantly), lies the altar-tomb of King Arthur, with his effigies all in armour lying upon it, while the queen, habited as a nun of Glastonbury, and her quondam lover, clad in helmet and mail, have met and hold discourse about their former lives and sins.¹

It was in 1856 Rossetti made five designs to illustrate *Poems by Alfred Tennyson*, which Moxon and Co. published in the following year, an event that, for the first time, really introduced our painter to the public at large. They are works of very great beauty, merit, and spirit, and represent *Lancelot looking on the dead Lady of Shalott*, *Mariana in the South*, *The Palace of Art* (two examples), and *Sir Galahad*. Their style, not less than their treatment, is thoroughly original, picturesque, and masculine, and quite different from any of the other illustrations in the volume.² Their history is well told in his brother's book. Some, if not

¹ Mr. W. Morris's fiery-hearted poem, *King Arthur's Tomb*, included with *The Defence of Guinevere*, 1858, illustrates the subject Rossetti chose for his drawing, and owed existence to it. While the catalogues refer to the *Morte Arthur* as the authority for the subject, I have not, although the first to describe the incident to Rossetti, been able to find anything about it in that wilderness of romance.

² Being drawn on the blocks direct, the original designs were unfortunately, photography not then being applied to save them, cut away by the engraver. Photographs of these originals, showing how much had been lost in the cutting, were, happily, taken from the blocks in their pristine condition. Such photographs were included in a limited

all these examples, Rossetti repeated in water-colours, and thus doubly extended his now growing reputation. *The Blue Closet*, a water-colour drawing executed for Mr. W. Morris, and now in the possession of Mr. George Rae of Birkenhead, belongs to 1857, and is one of the most romantic and, of its kind, subtlest of the artist's "inventions," which, in the justest and strictest sense of the term, it is. It is hardly necessary to say that the poet-painter had already made the colours of his pictures harmonize with their pathos, this he did even when designing the coloration of *Ecce Ancilla Domini*! in varieties of virginal white, giving the Venetian voluptuousness of Mr. Boyce's *Borgia* in sensuous splendours of diversely repeated reds, blacks, and yellows, and in the presageful gloom and terror of *How they Met themselves*, all haggard and woebegone, in the darkness of the shadow-haunted wood, and in the colours of the lover's dresses. Such harmony of subject and treatment is manifest in Mr. Rae's *Blue Closet*, an exercise intended to symbolize the association of colour with music. Four damsels appear in the composition, two of whom sing. Their dresses are respectively subdued purple and black, and pure emerald green and white. They occupy the rear of the group. The other pair are instrumentalists, and play on a double-keyed clavichord (a sort of a dulcimer) placed between them, while the one pinches the strings of a lute at her side, and her companion pulls the string of a little bell hanging

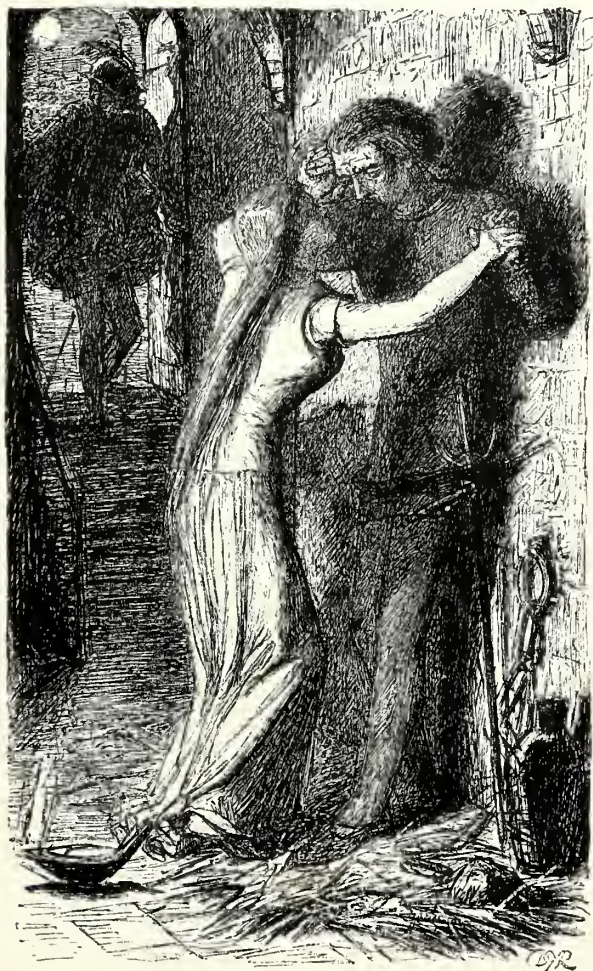
exhibition of Pre-Raphaelite works which was formed in 1857 at the then No. 4, Russell Place, Fitzroy Square (now incorporated with Charlotte Street). This exhibition had of Rossetti's works, besides the five photographs, *Dante's Dream at the Time of the Death of Beatrice*, an early version of the great picture now at Liverpool; *The Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice*, of which a plate is before the reader of this text; an unnamed example, *Mary Nazarene*; *Mary Magdalene*; Mr. Ruskin's drawing; *The Blue Closet*, Mr. Rae's beautiful picture, soon to be described in these pages, and *Hesterna Rosa*. The exhibition continued for a short time only, and had nothing to do with that of the original Hogarth Club, of 178, Piccadilly, and later, 6, Waterloo Place, which was not formed till June, 1858, when a similar exhibition to the above was set up. These designs for woodcuts were not the first of Rossetti's making; that distinction belongs to a charming illustration of Mr. Allingham's "Maids of Elfin Mere," published with *The Music Master*, 1855, and very much injured in the cutting. It represents three damsels clothed in white, who came

"With their spindles every night;
Two and one, and three fair maidens,
Spinning to a pulsing cadence,
Singing songs of Elfen-mere."

next to the lute. The chief colours of the foreground and its figures are those of the black-and-gold tapestry over the clavichord, the gold of the musical instruments, the white and crimson of the lute-player's garments, the scarlet, green, and white of those of her companion. As to the association of colour with music—of which this drawing is a subtle instance, more recondite than any of those examples where several old masters, and especially Rossetti himself, had made the coloration of their pictures subserve the pathetic expressiveness of their subjects—we may notice that the sharp accents of the scarlet and green seem to go with the sound of the bell ; the softer crimson, purple, and white accord with the throbbing notes of the lute and the clavichord, while the dulcet, flute-like voices of the girls appear to agree with those azure tiles on the walls and floor which gave to this fascinating drawing its name of *The Blue Closet*. *The Wedding of St. George*, another design in water-colours, likewise belonging to Mr. Rae, gives play of colour with sharp notes of red, yellow, and blue in contrast, and thus suggests the clashing of the joy-bells hanging in the background, which are struck with hammers by two very quaint attendant angels. The lovers are embracing after the combat which has delivered the lady from the clutches of the dragon. St. George's gilded corselet glows under his surcoat of scarlet, and the Princess's black tresses stream past her ardent face as she nestles to his breast. The champion's brooding looks (he was probably painted from Mr. W. Morris) indicate the danger he has undergone ; while the green and scaly head of the dragon, with red eyes of wrathful bloodthirstiness, is, as Rossetti was wont to say, conveniently packed in a case for despatch to Cappadocia.

The next illustration of our narrative finds a place here. It represents the prison scene in *Faust*, where the hero of Goethe's drama goes to the cell where, waiting an ignominious death because she had murdered her infant, Margaret is confined. By the aid of Mephistopheles he had provided means for her escape, but she, maddened by terror and love, passionately embraces him, and neglects his entreaties that she would seize the opportunity for flight. At the last moment the Tempter appears, as in the design, and vainly urges that it will soon be too late, and the executioners will arrive. The drawing has been kindly lent by Mr. Arthur Hughes, to whom Rossetti gave it long ago.

The Damsel of the Sangrael refers to the picture in the Union Room at Oxford, as described below, and now comes under notice. It was painted for Mr. W. Morris in 1857, and now belongs to Mr. Rae, to whom we owe much for leave to reproduce a characteristic work of the period in question, when Rossetti was deeply interested in the *Mort Arthur*,



Margaret and Faust.

of which, apart from Mr. Morris's passion for that romance, the nebulous splendours and fervours exactly suited the mood of the painter. The drawing shows a full-length figure of a damsel with dreamy eyes and com-



The San Grail.

posed lips, standing erect and still, and as if aloof from the world, her tresses spreading wide upon her shoulders, while she holds in one hand the sacramental cup, that very chalice of the raptures of Sir Galahad and his comrades of the Round Table, implying the

“Blessed Vision, Blood of God!”

which the champions sought to find somewhere upon this earth. It is a “romantic” (the painter’s own term), rather than a mystically inspired version of a theme which hardly lends itself to art, and it is difficult to believe that Rossetti spontaneously attempted to deal with it.

In the next cuts the reader has transcripts of some original designs, which Mr. Fairfax Murray has kindly lent, for one of the unfortunate pictures painted in 1857--8 on the walls of the Union Debating Society’s Room at Oxford. Seeing that the walls were intended to be left bare, or at best, clothed in detestable stucco, Rossetti, who had long been ambitious of distinguishing himself in mural decoration on a larger scale, offered to enrich them with pictures associated with legends of the Arthurian cycle, such as have been referred to here. His offer, some preliminary difficulties being got over, was accepted, although it was of the most extreme rashness. It was impelled by a rare enthusiasm, and, because of the artist’s absolute inexperience in painting otherwise than in oil or water-colours, was exceedingly unfortunate. Neither of these *media* being admissible, Rossetti decided to adopt distemper painting, of which, however, he knew practically next to nothing, not so much as concerned the right preparation of the walls to receive the colours, nor what pigments were trustworthy, nor how the effects of damp, gaseous and otherwise vitiated air upon the paintings were to be guarded against. He procured the aid of several brilliant artists to execute parts of the work, and so sanguine were the company that they actually hoped to finish in about a month, the series of pictures comprising numerous nearly life-size figures in well-filled compositions.¹ The

¹ The artists whose enthusiasm Rossetti raised to the highest pitch in this matter, were Mr. E. Burne-Jones; Mr. W. Morris, of *The Earthly Paradise*; Mr. Val Prinsep; Mr. Arthur Hughes; and Mr. R. Spencer Stanhope, whose devotional pictures are well known to the world. A more brilliant company it would, out of Paradise, be difficult to select; but not even Mr. Hughes, who was the best trained of the group, knew much of distemper painting on a large scale.

efforts of six months were almost ruined before that period was complete. At the present time the decorations are not legible. Rossetti's picture, which was never finished, is not the most dilapidated of the whole; it was intended to represent *Sir Lancelot asleep before the Shrine of the San Grael*. According to the legend it happened that, because of his sinning with Queen Guinevere the ever-victorious knight was not per-



Study for Guinevere and Sir Lancelot.

mitted to enter the sacred building which held the shrine : exhausted by travel and sorrow he rested on the earth outside that edifice and soon fell asleep ; while in this state he dreamt that his mistress appeared to him gorgeously arrayed, and with both arms extended while she held to the branches of an apple-tree, and looked at him with queenly pride and the loving pity of an ardent mistress who beheld the sufferings of her knight. In the air behind this group the Damsel of the San Grael is seen floating,

bearing the mysterious chalice that was unattainable by the impure of heart and frame, and refulgent in a sort of halo of angels. In the sketches here reproduced the reader has designs for parts of this unfortunate picture, the splendour of which, while it lasted, was at once fine



Study for Guinevere.

and intense. In one the Queen, drawn from Miss Siddall, stands with arms extended upon the branches of the apple-tree and contemplates the sleeping Lancelot, some friend or model officiating in this capacity. It is so very like the Mr. Burne-Jones of 1857, that it was certainly

drawn from him. In the next design the figure of Miss Siddall, as Guinevere, appears as before holding an apple; the Damsel of the San Grael is omitted. In the third sketch we have the figure of the *Ancilla San Grael* attending the death of Sir Bors and presenting to that valiant, virtuous and holy knight the much desired chalice and the sacred bread.

Belonging to the same category as the above group of sketches, is the



Ancilla San Grael.

transcript now before us from a design for *Sir Lancelot escaping from the Chamber of Guinevere*, which, though it is dated 1859, was probably produced during the period of those studies in the *Mort Arthur* which bore such splendid fruit as the above instances and *The Chapel before the Lists*, *The Death of Breuse sans Pitié*, both belonging to Mr. Rae; Mr. Leathart's *Sir Galahad in the Chapel*, and less important works; besides two or three potent drawings concerning St. George. Of the subject of the work now before us it will be remembered that the catastrophe of the intrigue of Lancelot and his royal mistress was brought about by the foes who surprised the guilty pair. Some of Rossetti's friends have not failed to

detect a satirical element in the rough sketch of *Alma Mater*, the ungirding of a knight with a sword, which, I understand, refers to the manner in which Mr. Woodward, the architect of the New Museum and the Union Room at Oxford, had been dealt with by the University authorities.

Much of 1858 was devoted to the execution of Rossetti's triptych

in Llandaff Cathedral, a powerful if not quite successful work which, however, need not detain us here. It represents *The Saviour adored by a Shepherd and a King*; *David as a Shepherd combating Goliath*, and *David as King*. In the summer of this year the Hogarth Club, of which the brothers Rossetti were important members, was founded. Among its principal objects, besides the promotion of friendly inter-



Lancelot in Guinivere's Chamber.

course, was the establishment of an exhibition room where pictures by its artistic members could be shown in a *quasi*-private manner, so that they would not be excluded from galleries, such as those of the Royal Academy, which declined works the public had previously seen.¹

¹ This society, which must not be confused with the existing club of the same name, included some of the most eminent and accomplished artists of the day. The first meeting was held July 2nd, 1858, at 178, Piccadilly; later, the club removed to

One of the chief figures in the *Salutatio Beatricis*, which was painted in 1859, is represented by this sketch for the figures of *Dante meeting Beatrice in Eden*, half of that diptych of which the other portion illustrated *Dante meeting Beatrice in Florence*; it was painted on a door in the Red House, which, after designs by Mr. Philip Webb, Mr. Morris



Alma Mater and Mr. Woodward.

built in an orchard at Upton, Bexley Heath. This ascription is conjectural, because the sketch may refer to the *Salutatio Beatricis*, now in the possession of Mr. J. Leathart, of Gateshead. Mr. Morris has long ago parted with the Red House, and the pictures painted there by

6, Waterloo Place, Pall Mall, where it continued to meet and show pictures by its members until April 19th, 1861, when it was dissolved. Several of Rossetti's drawings were hung there.

Rossetti ; mention of these suffices to recall the beginning of the latter's intimacy with the poet of *The Earthly Paradise*, which occurred some time before the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* was published in 1856, and was fortunate in bringing before the world the glorious *Burthen of Nineveh*, the original composition of which dates back to when, by his reading it aloud, that fine piece was made known to the author's circle of close friends. *Sister Helen*, a ballad royal if there ever was one, followed in about 1855, and was read in the same manner, but during the succeeding years, until 1880, or thereabouts, this poem continued to be improved. Most of Rossetti's more important pictures were, so to say, set in sonnets some of which are of priceless beauty, delightful in their colour, energy, movement and freshness. These poems, and especially the sonnets, are the outcome of a genius essentially pictorial, that is to say, a mind which saw everything—from the rose and ivory of a woman's carnations to the sullen splendour of a sunset—with the eyes of a painter revelling in colour, enraptured by the grace of a perfect curve, and capable of exquisite and sympathetic research when human pathetic expression was in view. In short, most of Rossetti's poems are pictures in words, in which respect there is a close, though partial, resemblance between his genius and that of Robert Browning.



Dante.

The next cut is of an indefinable date, probably *c.* 1859, and with extreme taste and felicity, represents a graceful girl standing at a doorway and, as a sort of Eve of later days, plucking apples from a tree.

Lucrezia Borgia, executed in 1860, comes next in our illustrations, and was thus, upon an unfinished and smaller version of the same, described by Rossetti himself : "*Lucrezia Borgia, Duchessa di Bisceglia*. The subject is the poisoning of her second husband, the Duke Alfonso

of Bisceglia. You see him in the mirror going on crutches, and walked up and down the room by Pope Alexander IV., to settle the dose of poison well into his system." Behind those figures, as they walk in the room and are seen in the mirror, is the bed where the victim is to perish. Lucrezia, standing in front, looks calmly towards them, and, smiling to herself, deliberately washes her hands after



Girl Plucking Fruit.

mixing the poisoned wine and placing it in the glass vessel on the table behind her. The Pope and Duke Alfonso are supposed to be in front of the scene, and much about where we, as spectators, stand, so that she looks at them, and in her eyes there is a lurid intense light, which is horribly fine, and this illustrates what we have said as to the artist's intense research where human expression was in view. The horror of the subject is enhanced by the magnificence of the woman's form, its stateliness and its beauty. In this picture there is a great force of colour and light and shade, forming chiaroscuro of which Giorgione might boast; the whole is painted in a higher key than Rossetti had, till

then, generally affected; it is solid and unusually carefully finished. Originally exhibited at the Hogarth Club, the completed version of *Lucrezia Borgia*, after remaining for a time with Mr. Leathart, passed into the collection of Mr. Rae, whose kindness allowed its reproduction for this text. About the same time, 1859-61, Rossetti began and finished the bust of a young woman, whose face, saturated with passion



Lucrezia Borgia.

as it is, baffles description, and justifies its title of *Bocca Baciata*, or *Lips that have been Kissed*. Like the last it was first exhibited at the Hogarth Club, and, as No. 309, at the Academy's Collection of Rossetti's Works, 1883. It is in oil, very highly finished, and modelled to a pitch far above the custom of modern painters. I have long reckoned *Bocca Baciata*, although a small example, one of the finest, as it is one of the subtlest and most difficult, of pictures of our age; it belongs to Mr. Boyce, having, moreover, that peculiar importance which attaches to the first remarkable, if not actually the first example of the artist's later, and much affected custom of painting single busts and half-length figures which, afterwards, came to be of life-size or even larger—of women, amorously, mystically, or moodily lost in dreams, or absorbed by thoughts too deep for words. In course of time a generation arose about Rossetti who knew him only by these startling, powerful and thoroughly original examples, and ignored him as a painter of *genre*, and dramatic and biblical themes.

Bocca Baciata and the Llandaff triptych being finished, or well advanced, Rossetti found time in 1860 to carry out in ink the original drawing (now the property of Mr. Boyce) of a very powerful little picture in water colours, which, in the next year, he finished at Chatham Place. This fine thing now belongs to Mr. Fairfax Murray, to whom the reader is indebted for seeing this version of the most humorous instance of Rossetti as a *genre* painter, and wit. Dr. W. Maxwell, a close crony of Johnson, told, among anecdotes of his friend, which are included in Boswell's *Johnson*, that "Two young women from Staffordshire [Lichfield acquaintances, no doubt] visited him [Johnson] when I was present, to consult him on the subject of Methodism, to which they were inclined. 'Come,' said he, 'you pretty fools, dine with Maxwell and me at the Mitre, and we will talk over that subject; which they did, and after dinner, he took one of them on his knee and fondled her for half an hour together.'" Rossetti, with keen humour, has made one of the "pretty fools" a little piqued at the favour of fondling which her companion obtains, while the latter, demure, but not unmoved, sits stiffly upon the knee of the doctor, who holds forth while he stirs his tea; Boswell, alive to the conversation, sips punch from a spoon, and the waiter, leaning over the curtain of the box,

conscientiously snuffs the candle, and, while dawn breaks in the sky without, seems to wish his customers would go. Rossetti, in introducing Boswell instead of Maxwell, did so by an oversight, or perhaps, because



Dr. Johnson at the Mitre.

a likeness of the former was easily obtained and sure to be recognized in his picture.

In 1861, the painter, who for a long time had had the work in hand, found himself in a position to publish *The Early Italian Poets from C.*

D'Alcamo to Dante Alighieri, with the *Vita Nuova* of the latter, which is the proper and almost indispensable complement to the *Divina Commedia*, a sort of autobiography of Dante in his youth and early manhood, which, as the catalogue of Rossetti's works attests, supplied him with texts for some important pictures, such as the *Salutatio Beatricis*, *Beata Beatrix*, now in the National Gallery, *Dante's Dream*, now at Liverpool, *La Donna della Finestra*, several of which we have yet to consider, and *Dante on the Anniversary of Beatrice's Death*, which has been previously described. *The Early Italian Poets* gave birth, so to say, in 1874, to *Dante and his Circle*, which included and extended the former work, and did whatever a book can to extend and elevate English ideas of the poetry to which it was devoted.¹

Rossetti's remaining works of 1861 included designs for stained glass, the logical character of which as a means of decoration, none understood so well as he.² A few replicas, many studies and portraits seem to have engaged the energies of our painter, while his wife's frequent illnesses, and other grave causes of distress, must have shaken him to the heart, and were more than enough to account for the fact that no serious picture proceeded from his easel until some time after his wife's death, in February, 1862, and her burial in the cemetery at Highgate. On the day of her interment he placed in her coffin, by way of sacrifice to her gentle spirit, a small volume of poems in manuscript, the greater number

¹ In the meantime, although Messrs. Smith and Elder published the earlier volume, the pecuniary results to the brilliant translator and learned annotator were, as his brother says, "on a very small scale." A presentation copy of the book was nevertheless priced in a bookseller's recent catalogue at £5 10s., i.e. about sixteen times the original sum. The volume announces *Dante at Verona, and other Poems. By D. G. Rossetti*, as "Shortly will be published," a collection which, in that form at least, never appeared.

² From the first he mastered the facts that, unlike pictures proper, which are seen by reflected light, paintings in glass, being transparent, are seen by transmitted light, and do not permit the use of modelling in light and shade, intended to give a false appearance of relief to that which ought to be of the nature of a mosaic in transparent media, with shadows, not modelled to anything like naturalistic or imitative results. Knowledge of this principle lies at the root of design in this application, and yet so dense was the ignorance of art then prevailing among antiquaries and *cognoscenti*, that Mr. C. Winston, a great authority as to the history of glass painting, and a first-rate copyist of ancient windows, refused to accept this rudimentary canon of the subject, and sanctioned those illogical and inartistic transparencies, which, vilely designed and childishly executed in the picture-glass works at Munich, offend the eyes of critics in

of which had been addressed to her by him, both before and during their wedded lives of less than two years' duration.¹

St. Paul's and Glasgow cathedrals. Greatly to Rossetti's influence, though not perhaps to his initiative (about which I am not certain), is due the successful and brilliant revival of art in glass, which has flourished chiefly by means of Messrs. F. M. Brown, W. Morris, Sir E. Burne-Jones, and a few other competent artists and manufacturers, by which the whole art and practice of *vitraux* have been revolutionized.

¹ As the leading subject of this text is the art of Rossetti as it is manifest in some of the more important and characteristic of his paintings, and because it does not pretend to be a complete biography, still less, an account of him as a poet, it will be well to anticipate time, and repeat what has been often told, to the effect that while some of the poems buried in his wife's grave existed imperfectly in other versions, many, if not all of them, were complete in the small volume only. Mr. Hall Caine says that "as one by one of his friends, Mr. Morris, Mr. Swinburne, and others attained to distinctions as poets, he [Rossetti] began to hanker after poetic reputation, and to reflect with pain and regret upon the hidden fruits of his best efforts." After many searchings of the heart, as well as promptings and encouragings from friends, the poet determined to recover the volume from the grave where they had been placed as if for ever. This was done on the night of the 6th or 7th of October, 1869, and in due time the desired verses were incorporated with other examples, and issued as "*Poems, by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.*" The honours of the poet were instantly acknowledged by all who had not already acknowledged them, and were worth seeking acknowledgments from. The volume which is now scarce, contains—besides most of the sonnets already published in the *Germ*—the "Blessed Damosel," which is illustrated below, the "Burthen of Nineveh," "Dante at Verona" (see above), "Jenny," "Sister Helen," fifty supremely beautiful sonnets and songs, intended to become a work to be called *The House of Life* (two of these were afterwards withdrawn, although they reappear in the Tauchnitz edition of the *Poems*), and a body of *Sonnets for Pictures*, etc., which referred to works by the poet himself, Ingres, Giorgione, Da Vinci, Mantegna, and of Sir (then Mr.) E. B. Jones.

I have often supposed that Rossetti might have found an authority, or example, for placing in and afterwards withdrawing his poems from the grave of his wife, in the record that when Francis I visited Avignon, that monarch caused the tomb of Laura de Sade to be opened, and took from it a small box containing verses which had been written by Petrarch's own hand, and were placed there by him; they were afterwards, by order of the King, returned.

CHAPTER III

1861—1882

WHEN he recovered from the shock of his wife's death, which was not till some months had passed, and he was settled in the large house at Cheyne Walk, a new and energetic sphere of life opened before our painter, of which almost the first output was Mr. Leathart's triptych in water colours of *Paolo and Francesca* (R.A. 1883, No. 291), a developed version of a design which Mr. Ruskin had some years before bought, and which is very well represented here by a transcript from one of Mr. Rae's treasures (Burlington Club, 1883, No. 13).

This is altogether a sadder and more sombre work than Mr. Leathart's. The first compartment represents with extraordinary power the kissing in the garden house ; the second the floating of the condemned pair in the dark regions, where in the irresistible air they roll as leaves roll in a strong current, still clasping each other, and with folded feet and garments all composed ; moving both as one they pass amid the rain of sapphire-hearted flames. The third compartment, the motto of which is "*O lasso !*" the poet's cry of pity, refers to the second division, and exhibits Virgil and his guest walking in the gloom, Dante regarding the lovers with pitying eyes, and holding his loose garment to his lips. In the first division, Paolo has looked up from the pictured page of the book the princess and he read together, and, all on fire at heart, seen answering fire in Francesca's eyes ; so he clasps both her hands in both of his, and they indulge with equal passion in the luxury of love. Abandoning her lips to his, she, under levelled eyelids, gazes on his face while it meets hers.

The Bride, or *The Beloved*, a noble picture which I regard as Rossetti's masterpiece—one only example, to wit *Proserpina*, to which we shall shortly come, being in my opinion fit to be compared with it—dates its origin from 1863,¹ and as regards its splendour and colour and the passion

¹ A letter from the painter to Mr. Rae, dated "December 22nd, 1863," mentions that his correspondent had previously seen the *Beloved* in a not quite finished condition.



Paolo ana Francesca aa Rimini.

of its design, need not fear comparisons with the greatest works of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Venice. In these respects this *chef d'œuvre* is a superb and ardent illustration of the Song of Solomon, "*My Beloved is mine, and I am his; let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth for thy love is better than wine.*"

The picture comprises—as if they had halted in a marriage procession, towards the spot where the enraptured bridegroom awaits them—five life-size adult maidens and a negro girl, who, in the front of the group, and bearing a mass of roses in a golden vase, is adorned with barbaric jewellery, all of which harmonizes with her dusky skin, which, although it has the true Titianesque ruddy undertint, is of a deep bronze-brown surface hue. The negress and her burthen are intended to contrast intensely with the costume and face of the bride herself, who is clad in an apple-green robe, as lustrous as silk and as splendid as gold and embroideries of flowers and leaves in natural colours can make it. This garment and its decorations support the colour of the dark maid's skin and heighten the value of the pure red and white of the bride's carnations, while the contours of the African's face and form contrast with the Caucasian charm of the bride, her stately countenance, and "amorous-lidded eyes."

The *Song* is aptly illustrated by the attire of the bride and her companions; it says, "She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework; the virgins that be her fellows shall bear her

In the February following Rossetti wrote again, and his note is an amusing illustration of that business capacity in which, as a bargain-maker, cash-receiver, and negotiator in general, he, to the wonder of his artistic and poetry-loving friends, shone greatly. Of his powers in these respects, bankers, lawyers, merchants, and everybody whose wisdom in cash and commerce was unchallengeable, spoke with unreserved admiration, not to say surprise. Mr. Leyland, who had ample experience as a buyer of Rossetti's works, humorously, kindly, and in the terms of Lowell's poem, joked about him as "a darned hard hand at a deal." A capital illustration of his ability in the managing of his affairs and negotiating the sale of his pictures is before me, in a letter to Mr. Rae, dated February 24th, 1864, proposing to sell five drawings, including *The Blue Closet* and *Paolo and Francesca*, which are before the reader, to the great Liverpool banker. Of these, he wrote, "the purchaser would have to arrange with me for the completion of the unfinished drawings," which were then in Mr. W. Morris's collection. "No opportunity," he urged, "is ever likely to occur again of obtaining drawings of mine at such a price, since they are all good specimens of my work." Than these statements nothing could be truer.

company, and shall be brought unto thee." On either side of the bride appear two damsels, not yet brides. The principal figures are differently clad, diverse in face and form, and to some extent contrasted in character and expression. Besides her robe the bride wears about her head and throat a veil of tissue differing in its green from that of the robe, and above her forehead rises an aigrette of scarlet enamel and gold, that resembles in some respects the peculiar headdress of ancient Egyptian royalty; this is set like a coronet upon her hair. While advancing towards the bridegroom, with an action at once graceful and natural, she, half thoughtfully, half in pride of supreme loveliness, has moved the tissue from her face and throat. With the same movement she has thrown backwards a large ringlet of her hair, revealing the softened dignity of her loveladen eyes, as well as her face, which is exquisitely fair and fine, and has the least hint of blushes within the skin, as though the heart of the lady quickened, while we see there is tenderness in her look, but voluptuous ardour nowhere.

All the four maids seem to have been chanting a nuptial strain, while they have moved rhythmically with the steps of the bride.

Excepting one or two later works of the master, where sentiment of a more exalted sort, as in *Proserpina*, inspired the designs, *The Beloved* appears to me to be the finest production of his genius. Of his skill, in the high artistic sense, implying the vanquishment of prodigious difficulties—difficulties the greater because of his imperfect technical education—there cannot be two opinions as to the pre-eminence of Mr. Rae's magnificent possession. It indicates the consummation of Rossetti's powers in the highest order of modern art, and is in perfect harmony with that poetic inspiration which is found in every one of his more ambitious pictures. This example can only be called Venetian, because of the splendid colouring which obtains in it. Tintoret produced works which assort most fortunately with this one, and his finely dramatic mode of designing reappears, so to say, in *The Beloved*, where the intensity of Venetian art is exalted, if that term be allowed, in a modern strain, while its form, coloration, and chiaroscuro are most subtly devised to produce a whole which is thoroughly harmonized and entirely self-sustained. Of how few modern instances could this be said? The colouring of this picture supports the sentiment of the design in the

happiest manner, and in its magnificence the work agrees with the chastity of the conception. There is a nuptial inspiration throughout it, even in the deep red of the blush roses the negress bears. The technique is so fine that it leaves nothing to be desired, even in the lustrousness of the gold vase, in the varied brilliancy of the robe of the bride, in the subtle delicacy of the carnations, solidly and elaborately modelled as they are and varied to suit the nature of each of the figures. Rossetti's *Beloved* is in English art what Spenser's gorgeous and passionate *Epithalamium* is in English verse, and, if not more rapturous, it is more compact of sumptuous elements.

We must hasten past several capital examples, besides minor pictures and studies which occupied the easels of Rossetti at this epoch, and devote attention to *Beata Beatrix*, that poetic version of his lost wife, which is her best if not her only monument, and one of the finest examples in the National Gallery. Dream-like, and of a dream, he painted this wonderful picture, which, if the *Bride* is an epithalamium, must surely be called a nuptial dirge. In some respects it is, as I have said in *The Portfolio* of 1891, even more distinctly than that superb achievement, *The Beloved*, a full and true reflection of the artist's idiosyncrasy of the higher order. The mysticism and mystery of *Beata Beatrix* are due to that which was, so to say, the innermost Rossetti, or Rossetti of Rossetti. The Beatrix of Dante's imagination, sits in a balcony of her father's palace in Florence. The picture places us in the chamber from which the balcony opens, and the damsel's form is half lost against the outer light, half merged in the inner shadows of the place. She is herself a vision while—her corporeal eyes losing power of outward speculation—the heavenly visions of the New Life are revealed to the eyes of her spirit. The open window gives a view of the Arno, its bridge, and the towers and palaces of that city in which Dante and Beatrix spent their lives till the fatal month of June, 1290, when she died, and, as the poet tells us, "the whole city came to be, as it were, widowed and despoiled of all dignity," or as the frame in the National Gallery has it, being Dante's own verse, uttered when her death was announced to him, and borrowed from Jeremiah, "*Quomodo sedet sola civitas.*" In the picture the form of Beatrix is opposed to the dun evening light of the outer world, and so placed that the light

shines through the outer threads of her dark auburn hair, and thus produces the effect of a saint-like halo, while the face itself, is to our



Study of a Head.

sight, merged in the dimness caused by our looking at the splendour of the river. Accordingly, the figure appears partly outlined against the

lustre, partly lost in the half-gloom of the chamber. It is thus visible in what may be called a twilight of brilliance and a twilight of shadow, and the abstruseness of the design is manifest. Her form is merged, not lost, in that shadowy space which, in Butler's happy phrase, is "of brightness made." Thus Rossetti happily showed that his subject was a mystery, not without life of this world, nor all unreal.

As to the picture itself and its spectators, it is obvious that we remain on the mundane side of things, while Beatrix in a swoon passes into the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and the Florence that Rossetti painted is the Heavenly City of the Future. Her features look pale in the half gloom, and her hands, which erst clasped each other in her lap, have fallen apart to lie supine because their task is almost done, and this is celestial light that glances on them. A dove, of deep rose-coloured plumage, and, like the bird of the Annunciation, crowned with an aureole, poises on downward wings at her knees, and bears to Beatrix's hand a white poppy—*i.e.*, the mystical flower in which Rossetti meant to combine the emblems of death and chastity. Her face is in most respects a likeness of the painter's wife, but it is obvious that, although it was not intended for a portrait of the lady, it may well be called a spiritual translation, inspiring features which had but a general resemblance to those of Beatrix which he depicted with so much pathos. In the background the poet Dante attentively regards the figure of Love, the ideal Eros of his vision, who, holding a flaming heart, passes on the other side of the picture heavenwards, and seems to sign to him that he should follow in that path. This vermilion-clad genius is, of course, the *Eidolon*, Spiritual Beatrix, or celestial Love, whose earthly image was the Beatrix the poet made immortal in immortal verse.¹

We have now to pass to Mr. Rae's *Sibylla Palmifera*, the noble seated figure of a virgin, quiet and pale, as if long absorbed in the contemplation of the mysteries of life and thought, and holding a palm before a shrine,

¹ This picture was begun in 1863, finished in 1865, bought in 1866 by the Hon. W. Cowper Temple, created Lord Mount Temple. After his death his widow, who exhibited it at the Academy in 1883, partly to carry out his wish, partly in honour of the artist, gave it to the National Gallery. There are two, not so fine, versions of it in oil, besides a repetition, if not two, in water colours, a drawing in crayons, and various studies for parts of this work. The *Portfolio*, 1891, contained an etching from this picture.

while at her side burns a lamp whose steadfast flame rises towards a garland of roses which hangs near the sculptured head of a cherub ; on the other side is a thurible from which smoke ascends slowly in circles, towards a Death's-head, over which is suspended a wreath of poppies. Above the sibyl's head hangs a festoon of olive boughs and, carved in a niche, is a sphinx, with other emblems of mysteries. Two butterflies, one of gold, the other of a carnation tint, whose significance may be easily imagined, hover near the sibyl's shoulder. The coloration of this fine work, of which Rossetti thought very highly, is as apt and powerful as that of *The Beloved*, but, of course, of a very different kind ; it expresses pathos of quite another sort, and, so to say, is such as Milton would desire for

“Him that yon soars on golden wing,
Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,
The Cherub Contemplation.”

As was his wont in several cases, our painter wrote a fine sonnet illustrating this picture and its theme, and published it in *Poems*, 1871. As these lines are reprinted as “Soul's Beauty” in *Ballads and Sonnets*, the reader will be pleased to find it here. Like the picture, the sonnet has its antithesis in “Body's Beauty,” or “Lilith,” which is described below.

SIBYLLA PALMIFERA.

“Under the arch of life, where love and death,
Terror and mystery, guard her shrine, I saw
Beauty enthroned ; and though her gaze struck awe,
I drew it in as simply as my breath.
Hers are the eyes which over and beneath,
The sky and sea bend on thee,—which can draw,
By sea or sky or woman, to one law,
The allotted bondman of her palm and wreath.”

“This is that Lady Beauty, in whose praise
Thy voice and hand shake still,—long known to thee
By flying hair and fluttering hem,—the beat
Following her daily of thy heart and feet,
How passionately and irretrievably,
In what fond flight, how many ways and days !”

On *Venus Verticordia*, for leave to reproduce the water-colour version of which we are indebted to Mr. Rae, Rossetti wrote a passionate sonnet which, as it contrasts intensely with the above example, and because it describes the picture in splendid words, may be welcome here from the edition of 1870, which is repeated from the text on the frame of Mr. Rae's picture :

VENUS

"She hath the apple in her hand for thee,
 Yet almost in her heart would hold it back ;
 She muses, with her eyes upon the track
 Of that which in thy spirit they can see.
 Haply, 'Behold, he is at peace,' saith she ;
 'Alas ! the apple for his lips,—the dart
 That follows its brief sweetness to his heart,—
 The wandering of his feet perpetually !'

"A little space her glance is still and coy ;
 But if she gives the fruit that works her spell,
 Those eyes shall flame as for her Phrygian boy.
 Then shall her bird's-strained throat the woe foretell,
 And her far seas moan as a single shell,
 And her grove glow with love-lit fires of Troy."

She stands before a maze of honeysuckle flowers and foliage, to obtain which Rossetti wrote to Mr. Rae that he "lost a whole week, and pounds on pounds," and it is backed by a dense mass of roses of rich varieties and depths of tone ; it is as if—all fresh and blushing in the daylight—she, nearly naked, stood in a wilderness of flowers ; her face is that of a woman, young, tender and ardent, but not without the wistfulness of pity which is indicated by the verses.

We are now studying the very highest examples of Rossetti's genius during its second, or third, and most sumptuous manifestation. Of the productions of the period embracing 1864 to 1872, few surpass and few approach *Lilith*, of which a transcript from a photo-

¹ There are two versions of this subject, more or less resembling the example before us, and painted in oil ; that which (dated 1868) Mr. W. Graham lent, as No. 305, to the Academy in 1883, was originally the largest and finest of all. It was much injured by repaints, and sold in 1885 for £588.

graph, taken before certain alterations which few consider improvements, is now before the reader. Rossetti got a hint of the subject from that



Lilith.

delightful repertory of whim, wit and learning, the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, by R. Burton, who wrote "The Thalmudists say that Adam had a wife called Lillis, before he married Eve, and of her he begat nothing

but devils." On this hint, and, perhaps from a few lines in Shelley's translation of *Faust*, the painter-poet set about to educe in solid form his notions of the fair and evil-hearted witch, who, as a sort of Lamia, had been originally formed like a serpent. He took her as a type of the "Body's Beauty," and endeavoured, by the forces of contrast and antithesis, to make more distinct the nobler, because chaster, charms of *Sibylla Palmifera*. As with regard to the latter, so with *Lilith* he illustrated his meaning in the following sonnet.

BODY'S BEAUTY.

"Of Adam's first wife, Lilith, it is told
 (The witch he loved before the gift of Eve),
 That, ere the snake's, her sweet tongue could deceive,
 And her enchanted hair was the first gold.
 And still she sits, young while the earth is old,
 And, subtly by herself contemplative,
 Draws men to watch the bright net she can weave,
 Till heart and body and life are in its hold.

"The rose and poppy are her flowers ; for where
 Is he not found, O Lilith, whom shed scent
 And soft-shed kisses and soft-shed sleep shall snare ?
 Lo ! as that youth's eyes burned at thine, so went
 Thy spell through him, and left his straight neck bent
 And round his heart one strangling golden hair." ¹

As Rossetti painted *Lilith* she appears in the ardent languor of triumphant luxury and beauty, seated as if she lived now, and reclining back in a modern robe, if that term be taken rightly ; the abundance of her pale golden hair falls about her Venus-like throat, bust and

¹ The sonnet written on the frame of that version of this picture which belonged to the late Mr. F. Leyland (Burlington Club, 1883, No. 47), is not quite the same as this. The original version belongs to Mr. Bancroft, Junior, of Wilmington, Delaware, U.S.A. The charming actress, whose stage name was Miss Herbert, and who sat more than once to Rossetti, was, I believe, the model for this face and form. The reader will find some curious matter about Lilith and similar fair witches in *Notes and Queries*, Sixth Series, vols. viii. and ix., under "Curiosities of Superstition in Italy," and written by Mr. R. H. Busk. A reduced version of the work before us is in water-colours, with the face altered, and is, or was, in the collection of Mr. Alexander Stevenson, of Tynemouth (B. Club, 1883, No. 55).

shoulders, and with voluptuous self-applause—an element of the design rendered with ineffable imagination and skill—she contemplates her features in the mirror her left hand holds, while with the other hand, using a comb, she draws apart the long filaments of her hair. The haughty luxuriousness of the beautiful witch's face, the tale of a cold soul amid all its charms, does not belie, such was the art of the master in painting it, the fires of a voluptuous physique. She has passion without love, and languor without satiety—energy without heart, and beauty without tenderness or sympathy for others—for her lovers least of all. She holds the mirror with negligent grace, and, self-absorbed, trains her bewitching locks, letting them fall as her slow fingers move in their long masses. Thus occupied, she is reckless how much or how little of her bosom and shoulders is displayed in a delicious harmony of colour with the warm white of her dress, heedless of the grace of her attitude, and the superb abundance of her form. A larger mirror stands behind the lolling figure, and reflects a garden; beyond the lady a mass of roses bloom. These blossoms of strong and varied hues, the warmer ivory of her carnations, with inner rosy tints paler than the flowers, and the diverse whites of Lilith's garments, including an ample mantle lined with fur, are charming elements of a fine coloration. The expression of the witch's face is, in the water-colour version, at once more amorous and more cruel than that of the picture in oil, and I am at one with Mr. W. Rossetti in preferring the former face, which retains the painter's original intention, to the latter, which is due to revision at a latter period, although the oil version itself is still dated 1864; the reduced instance in water colours being dated 1867. Such are the delays incident to painting great pictures.¹

Passing Mr. Craven's *Washing Hands*, a lady by that action significantly dismissing a lover (B. Club, 1883, No. 54); Mr. Rae's vigorous

¹ Here is part of a letter from the artist to Mr. Rae, setting forth causes of repeated delays in finishing the picture now in question:—"Feb. 1, 1866. . . I hope to have made some progress with *Palmifera* by the time the *Beloved* reaches you, but cannot expect very much. So don't be surprised, if you come soon, to see no great advance. It may be otherwise, however—there is no knowing in such a lottery as painting where all things have a chance against one—weather, stomach, temper, model, paint, patience, self-esteem, self-abhorrence, and the Devil into the bargain."

tragedy called *A Fight for a Woman*, two knights in a duel ; *The Blue Bower* (not the same as Mr. Rae's *Blue Closet*, but a half-length figure of the sitter for *Bocca Baciata* and *Lilith*), which belongs to Mr. Craven ; the charmingly fresh and pure *Il Ramoscello*, the bust of a young girl, of which, prefixed to Mr. Colvin's accomplished essay on Rossetti, there is a good woodcut in the *Magazine of Art*, 1883 ; *Regina Cordium*, a head in oil of the beautiful Miss Wilding ; we come to Mr. Rae's superb *Monna Vanna*, or *The Lady with the Fan*, which has something that is evanescent and fickle in her expression, a self-centred character revealed by every feature, lovely as these are. The ends of a long coral necklace are about her wrists, and she is drawing the carcanet slowly round her neck ; a heart-shaped jewel of clear white crystal is suspended on her breast, a hard, cold, colourless gem that is significant of her soul and its impulses : she holds a fan of brown feathers, like those of a pheasant's wing, and wears a robe of white tissue, the folds of which are at once beautiful and unstable, embroidered with gold in lines that scintillate here and there. Her lips that have been often kissed are cherry-coloured, ripe and full, yet not warmed by inner passion, nor exalted by rapture of contemplation, as those of *Sibylla Palmifera*, still less are they chaste and untasted like those of the maiden of *Il Ramoscello*. Painted in 1866, and repainted in 1873, this picture was No. 302 in the Academy, 1883. It is sometimes called *Belcolore*, but is quite different from a work of 1863 which is so named, and shows a girl biting a rosebud. A choice work in oil called *A Christmas Carol*, a young girl singing with gladness to a lute, dates from 1867, and belongs to Mr. Rae. It has been well etched by M. Gaujean. In this year we reckon *Tristram and Iseult drinking the Love-Potion*, the latest of Rossetti's illustrations of the Arthurian legends, as a very telling representation of a fine and pregnant subject. It belongs, or lately did so, to Mr. Leathart, and in some respects may be ranked with *The Loving Cup*, an inferior version of which was recently in the Leyland Collection ; Mr. Graham's of a later date is better.

No production of 1868 by Rossetti charms the student more than the noble *Aurea Catena* (now the property of Lord Battersea), sometimes called *The Lady with the Chain*, a sort of portrait of Mrs. W. Morris, which from a drawing in crayons forms the subject of our next illustra-



The Lady with the Gold Chain.

tion, and is the first of a very numerous category of pictures, cartoons, and studies from that lady.

The design of this beautiful work explains itself, and needs no more to be said than correcting the error which has named it as *La Pia*, a title due to an oil picture of 1868, illustrating the fifth canto of the *Purgatorio* of Dante, which belonged to Mr. Leyland and, if space permitted, should have ample attention in this text.¹

¹ There is only a general resemblance between the designs of *Aurea Catena* and *La Pia*. The unhappy lady who bore the latter name, Pia de' Tollomei, was wife of Nello della Pietra of Siena, who, until she died there, was confined by her husband in a fortress of the fever-haunted Maremma. In Rossetti's picture she is dressed in blue and white drapery, seated behind the rampart of her prison, with heart-breaking languor and despair looking over the plain and moodily trifling with her fatal wedding ring. *La Pia* was No. 319 at the Academy, 1883, and at Mr. Leyland's sale, May, 1892, sold to Mr. Bibby for 300 guineas, a comparatively small price for a Rossetti in good condition, and measuring 42 × 48 inches. It was not finished till 1881, and is therefore one of the master's latest productions. Together with the *Day Dream*, *La Pia* is described at length in the *Athenæum*, 1881, No. 2783. Dante met the unquiet spirit of Pia de' Tollomei in Purgatory, among those whose opportunity of repentance was only at the last moment, and who died without absolution. From the *Purgatorio* the artist thus translated her appeal to the Italian poet—

“‘ Ah ! when on earth thy voice again is heard,
And thou from the long road hast rested thee,’
(After the second spirit said the third),
‘ Remember me who am La Pia ; me
Siena, me Maremma, made, unmade,
This in his inmost heart well knoweth he
With whose fair jewel I was ringed and wed.’ ”

Such a theme as these lines indicate is very different from that of the picture before us, although the works make it obvious that the same lady sat for both. Before me lies an autograph version of the translation as above, which in the fifth line differs from that engraved upon the frame of the painting, being—

“ From Siena sprung, and by Maremma dead.”

The alteration shows Rossetti's extreme care in translating and adapting texts to his pictures, and was effected between my visit to him, when the work was available, and the engraving of the lines on the frame. As previous pages have shown it was Rossetti's frequent custom to write illustrative verses on the frames of his pictures such as this, *The Day Dream*, *Monna Vanna*, *Proserpine*, and the like. The practice was a survival of what he had done when writing the sonnets published in the *Germ*, and it was continued to his last days. Not all these verses are included in the published volume of the artist's poems. *Aurea Catena* was Lot 38 in the Rossetti sale catalogue at Christie's, May 12, 1883.

In its preparation, if not in its completion, following *Aurea Catena*, we find our subject dealing with *Rosa triplex*, a water-colour drawing for Mr. W. Graham, and representing three beautiful female heads, delineated alike in different views of Miss Alice Wilding, one of the loveliest models who sat to Rossetti not only for this noteworthy group, but for the heads of the ladies in *Sibylla Palmifera*, *Veronica Veronese*, *The Roman Widow* (otherwise *Dis Manibus*) *La Ghirlandata*, *The Sea Spell*, and various drawings and studies of choice qualities. She began to sit to him, I think, about 1864, and continued to do so till about ten years later, and, in regard to her form and air, he never adopted a more exquisite type of womanhood, *per se*. As a type she succeeded Miss Ruth Herbert, as that lady named herself in public, and in the later portion of her decade, was to some extent superseded by Mrs. Morris, who sat to the painter so often and to such marked effect that idle critics, ignorant of the facts, were accustomed to censure Rossetti for always, as they said, depicting the same type of womanhood. As to this, the truth has been set forth by the artist's brother, who enumerated not fewer than fourteen different models whom our common subject had excelled with, to say nothing of those who sat for inconsiderable heads or were not literally represented in pictures and studies of all sorts. There are not fewer than five versions of *Rosa triplex*, of the first and best of which, dated 1867, the *Portfolio* in 1892 gave a fine reproduction from the red chalk drawing in the National Gallery, a bequest of Mr. J. J. Lowndes, who died in 1891. Here is part of what the *Portfolio* published concerning the versions of *Rosa triplex*, the history of which illustrates so many of the characteristics of Rossetti and his art, that I should be sorry to omit it from these pages.

"In all these cases the artist worked, so to say, simply as a devotee of Beauty in one manifestation of that divine element, but with no distinct intention to develop the spiritual essence of his ideal by imparting to the luxurious and refined physical aspect of the person in question those mystical impressions which pervade *Sibylla Palmifera*, the romantic inspiration of *Veronica Veronese*, the spirituality which, to the heart of it, is Italian of the sixteenth century, or *La Ghirlandata's* dreamy amorousness, the spell of which she is weaving with the notes of the harp whose strings her fingers slowly and daintily caress. The

rapture of her deep blue eyes attests the secret of the throbbing music which loses itself amid the foliage of her bower; so intense is the inspiration of the picture. Nor in depicting *Rosa triplex*, was Rossetti seeking to express

“‘In Venus’ eyes the gaze of Proserpine,’

which was the poetic motive of his *Pandora*, instinct with mysterious trouble.”

So many differently inspired versions did Rossetti give us of the beauty of Alice Wilding. Nevertheless, I dare say, not a little of her charm existed mostly in the passionate heart of the painter; yet I well remember that nothing he drew of her, diverse as the delineations were, seemed less than an exact likeness. Of course, one saw her through the mood of the artist and it has sometimes appeared to me that the ardent poem he called *The Portrait* referred, however generally, yet chiefly, to her, when he described how, when “my lady’s picture” was finished he exclaimed——

“Lo ! it is done. Above the long, lithe throat
The mouth’s mould testifies of voice and kiss,
The shadowed eyes remember and foresee.
Her face is made her shrine. Let all men note
That in all years (O Love, thy gift is this !)
They that would look on her must come to me.”

Did ever lover, poet and painter write of his mistress more finely than thus? In *Sibylla Palmifera* the model of *Rosa triplex* is presented in an impressive light, and the artist himself appears therein characteristically as the devotee of that intellectual beauty which Shelley named

“The awful shadow of some unseen power.”

Rossetti’s sonnet on the sibyl I have already quoted.

La Bionda del Balcone (the blonde Lady of the Balcony) followed *Rosa triplex* in the same year, 1868, and was succeeded by *The Princess Sabra drawing the fatal Lot*, both in water colours, and *La Pia* was finished for Mr. Leyland. Then, in 1869, came *La Donna della Finestra* (The Lady at the Window) otherwise *The Lady of Pity*, and supposed to be that dame who, according to the *Vita Nuova*, looked with profound compassion upon Dante when he passed by her house weeping because of the death of

Beatrice. He feared the people would notice his sorrow, and looking up, saw a young and beautiful lady pitifully regarding him from her window. The first version of this subject Rossetti made in crayons and sold to Mr. W. Graham, it was afterwards reproduced in photography and published; next, in 1879, came, if I understand the painter's brother rightly, a version in oil which Mr. F. S. Ellis bought, and thirdly, in 1881, a somewhat different version of the same design, which the artist left unfinished, and comprising the head and hands only. A study in chalks of *The Lady of Pity* was Lot 23, at Rossetti's sale. Lot 101 in the same sale was a picture in oil, including the head and hands only, and this, doubtless, is the original of the cut before us. This, although the sale catalogue gives its date as *c.* 1878 (the date of Lot 23, being *c.* 1875), I, following a rule adopted in this text, place here, according to Mr. W. Rossetti's date of the primary type of the whole category, *i.e.*, Mr. Graham's version of *La Donna della Finestra*. Mr. F. S. Ellis's version was No. 321 in the Academy, 1883, and dated 1879.¹

The earliest rendering of *Pandora*, which is in crayons, dates from 1869 and belonged to Mr. T. Eustace Smith, who lent it to the Burlington Club in 1883. Mr. John Graham had a version in oil (R.A. 1883, No. 320), dated 1871. It represents a half-length figure, with long, dark auburn hair, in red drapery, and holding a casket inscribed "Nesitur ignescitur," and from which a red flame issues. Rossetti wrote a sonnet for this picture, which, as it illustrates its poetical and pathetic motives, and is not reprinted in *Ballads and Sonnets* may be quoted here :—

PANDORA.

"What of the end, Pandora? Was it thine
The deed that set these fiery pinions free?
Ah! wherefore did the Olympian consistory
In its own likeness make thee half divine?"

¹ If the reader is of a generous, not to say a merciful, disposition, he will in these and other instances forgive possible errors in dating examples mentioned in this text. The confusion of the titles, dates and descriptions of Rossetti's works remains great, although the painter's brother has done much to lay straight the threads of a tangled skein of records.



Our Lady of Pity.

Was it that Juno's brow might stand a sign
 For ever? and the mien of Pallas be
 A deadly thing? and that all men might see
 In Venus' eyes the gaze of Proserpine?

"What of the end?—These beat their wings at will
 The ill-born things, the good things turned to ill—
 Powers of the impassioned hours prohibited.
 Aye, hug the casket now! Whither they go
 Thou mayst not dare to think, nor canst thou know
 If Hope still pent there be alive or dead."

Neither the picture nor the sonnet is a first-rate work of Rossetti's, though they both illustrate his power of projecting himself into a subject which, in itself, seemed to have been made on purpose for him.

The next important picture by our poet-painter is that which many consider to be his *chef-d'œuvre*, to wit, the famous *Dante's Dream*, now in the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, where it was placed by public subscription. Mr. W. Rossetti has told at length the history of this very fine and impressive work, which, begun in 1869, continued to be a sort of heroic white elephant, remaining chiefly in the painter's studio till 1881. I do not intend to enter into this subject now—the picture having been again and again before the public—or to describe at length the grand and monumental design itself. Suffice it that, when at the Academy in 1883, it was thus, in the painter's own memoranda, explained: "The scene is a chamber of dreams, strewn with poppies, where Beatrice is seen lying on a couch, as if just fallen back in death; the winged figure of Love, in red drapery (the pilgrim Love of the *Vita Nuova*, wearing the scallop shell on his shoulder) leads by the hand Dante, who walks conscious but absorbed, as in sleep; in his other hand Love carries his arrow pointed at the dreamer's heart, and with it a branch of apple-blossom; as he reaches the bier, Love bends for a moment over Beatrice with the kiss which her lover has never given her; while the two green-clad dream-ladies hold the pall full of May-blossom suspended for an instant before it covers her face for ever." There are many minor incidents which need not detain us. Probably it was of the chalk drawing reproduced on page 63 which Mr. Rae bought of his friend in 1872, that Rossetti wrote "it was done right off at once."

It seems to be an elaborated study for the head of one of the "dream-ladies" and pall-bearers, who is on our right in this large picture. Its beauty speaks for itself. It is a more or less exact likeness of Miss Spartali, now Mrs. W. J. Stillman, and a distinguished lady-artist who sat otherwise to our painter, especially for the *Fiammetta* of 1870.

So long ago as 1855 our artist had been attracted by the subject of *Dante's Dream*, when he made a water-colour drawing to illustrate it, which Miss Heaton lent to the Burlington Club, 1883. Mr. V. Lushington wrote in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, August, 1866, an enthusiastic essay upon the design, which, in 1857, was included in the Russell Place Exhibition. A double predella was added to the largest of Rossetti's works, and it was the subject of countless discussions, experiments, and alterations, as well as of a world of studies and negotiations, including more than one change of owner. At last, in 1881, it was sold to Liverpool for £1,050, which was far below its artistic value, and less than Rossetti had received for much less ambitious examples of his art.

From the magnificent drawing in crayons Mr. Constantine A. Ionides lent, as No. 80, at the Burlington Club's exhibition of 1883, inscribed with the artist's monogram, and dated 1870, the reproduction of *A Lady with a Fan*, now before us, was taken. Like the model who sat for this, as well as for *Monna Vanna* and many other fine things of the same category, its noblest function is to "live and be beautiful." Accordingly, it explains itself, and has no history that can be set forth here, except so far as relates to Rossetti's honour as, when he was pleased to do justice to himself, a perfect draughtsman. This exquisite example attests that no one could draw a head with more skill, art, and taste than he; while, except the hands, which are a little too large, the whole work is faultless. The year 1870 did not witness the completion of any important painting, a shortcoming for which the glorious *Proserpine*, that had its inception in a drawing of Mrs. Morris, dated 1871, made ample amends. Although the oil picture of this theme, which Mr. W. A. Turner lent to the Manchester Exhibition in 1882, and as No. 86 to the Burlington Club in 1883, is dated 1877, I consider it under the earlier date. It represents at life-size, a single figure of Proserpine in Hades, holding in her hand the pomegranate, by partaking of which she precluded her



Lady with a Fan.

return to earth.¹ She is passing along a gloomy corridor in her palace, and, on the wall behind her, a sharply defined space of light has fallen. It is the cool, bluish, silvery light of the moon, that because of some open door far overhead has penetrated the subterranean dimness, flashing down for a moment on the wall, revealing the ivy-tendrils that languish in the shade, displaying the queen, her features, the abundant masses of her hair, which seem to have become darker than was ever known on the earth above, and the sorrowfulness of her face. It shows also the slowly curling smoke of an incense-burner (the attribute of a goddess) which, in the still air of the gallery, circles upwards, and spreading, vanishes. Proserpine is clad in a steel-blue robe, that fits loosely her somewhat slender, slightly wasted, but noble frame of antique mould. It seems that she moves slowly with moody eyes instinct with slowly burning anger; yet she is outwardly still, if not serene, and very sad in all her stateliness; too grand for complaint. In these eyes is the deep light of a great spirit, and, without seeing or heeding, they look beyond the gloom before her. Her fully-formed lips, purplish now, but ruddy formerly, and once moulded by passion, are compressed, the symbols of a strenuous soul yearning for freedom, and, with all their pride, suffering, rather than enjoying goddess-ship. The even-tinted cheeks are rather flat; the face, so wide is the brow, is almost triangular, the nose like that of a grand antique. These features are set in masses of bronze-black and crimped hair, darkly lustrous as it is, that encompasses the head, and flows like an abundant mantle over her shoulders and bust. The wonder of the picture is in the face. The light cast on the wall throws the head in strong relief; she turns slowly towards the distant gleam; the ivy branch curves downwards, and assists, with the swaying lines of the drapery, the composition of the whole.²

¹ In countless early Italian pictures the bitten pomegranate is a well understood emblem of sorrow and pain. Hence it often occurs in the hand of the Infant Christ, who, in several examples, presses the fruit to the lips of His mother. On this account, no doubt, Rossetti placed the pomegranate in the hand of Proserpine.

² See the *Athenæum*, 1875, No. 2494. Rossetti wrote to Mr. Rae—"Oct 12th, 1877. The present one [*Proserpine*] belonging to myself was begun before Leyland's [of 1873], and thus had the immense advantage of the first inspiration from nature. It is unquestionably the finer of the two, and is the very flower of my work. . . . You

Rossetti wrote a sonnet in Italian, and an English version of the same, both of which are inscribed on the frame of the picture in question. The latter is as follows :

PROSERPINA.

“Afar away the light that brings cold cheer
 Unto this wall,—one instant and no more
 Admitted at my distant palace door.
 Afar the flowers of Enna from this drear
 Dire fruit, which, tasted once, must thrall me here.
 Afar those skies from this Tartarean gray
 That chills me : and afar, how far away,
 The nights that shall be from the days that were.

“Afar from mine own self I seem, and wing
 Strange ways in thought, and listen for a sign :
 And still some heart unto some soul doth pine,
 (Whose sounds mine inner sense is fain to bring,
 Continually together murmuring,)—
 ‘Woe’s me for thee, unhappy Proserpine !’ ”

These are indeed profound sighs, worthy of a goddess of the antique mould, and even sadder than the picture to which they refer. As to their subject, every friend of the painter knew that he was prouder of having invented it than of his share in devising, or rather applying to art any other theme in which he excelled. Reckoning *The Bride* as his technical *chef-d’œuvre*, I place *Proserpine* next to it, not because it is as well or better painted than half-a-dozen of his capital pieces, severally, but on account of the complete originality of its theme. On the other hand it should be remembered that, while he produced at least four or five versions of *Proserpine*, he never ventured on a second *Bride*.

The disastrous use of chloral, which was ultimately to insure his ruin, while it certainly did not act alone in promoting that catastrophe, had not, in 1871, although he became addicted to it more than two years

may perhaps have seen an article in the *Athenæum* relating to some pictures of mine completed at that time, and among which this is the first mentioned. The size is the same as Leyland’s, the price 1,000 guineas.” Mr. Leyland’s version was sold in May, 1892, for 540 guineas ; it was No. 314 at the Academy, 1883. Mr. Turner’s version is that which Mr. W. Rossetti distinguishes as No. 3 of the rather numerous category of *Proserpines* ; it now belongs to Mr. C. Butler, and is that which the painter himself thought highest of. It is the original of the plate before us for which we are indebted to Mr. Fairfax Murray.

before, made deep inroads upon our poet's energies, nor reduced his power in art. But it is noteworthy that, sometime before 1868, when chloral came to his hands, nearly all the subjects of his pen and brush were more or less desponding; of those none is sadder than *Proserpine*. At this time the chivalric and romantic subjects he had affected so late as the *Tristram and Iseult* of 1867, disappeared from his repertory, and gave place to the woe of Ceres' daughter, the mournful despair of *La Pia*, the sad pity of the *Donna della Finestra*, the ominous agony of *Pandora*, the sorrowing of Dante in the *Dream*, and the vague melancholy of *Veronica Veronese*, whose music is a dirge. Rossetti was not the man to "be sad o' nights out of mere wantonness," and therefore we must seek a cause for his selecting themes so gloomy and so woebegone as these, and may perhaps find it in the insidious effects of the drug which precipitated, though it did not cause his downfall, and—long before he had reached the allotted goal of man's existence—left desolate that noble "House of Life," whose inner treasures his poetry and painting set forth with

"Such a pencil, such a pen."

Besides the works described above, the years 1871, 1872, and 1873 were chiefly devoted by Rossetti to the production of minor portraits and new versions of already completed masterpieces, such as the repetitions of *Beata Beatrix*, *Hesterna Rosa*, *Rosa triplex*, and *Proserpine*. Two noteworthy exceptions are *Veronica Veronese*, which he painted for Mr. Leyland, and *La Ghirlandata*, which Mr. W. Graham bought. The former belongs to 1872, and, when it was No. 295 at the Academy in 1883, was thus described by the *Athenæum* in a criticism which I cannot now improve. "*Veronica Veronese* is the life-size figure in profile to our right, her head turned in a dreamy mood towards us, while with levelled eyelids and parted lips, she listens to the notes produced by her fingers on the strings of a violin hanging above the table where she has been writing music. The sharp notes are repeated, and inspired by the shrill song of a canary in a cage suspended behind the lady's seat, and to which she is endeavouring to give pathetic expression in the ordered music of her instrument. Rossetti appears here again to be giving expression in art to those associations of sound, colour, and sense which are hardly less obviously embodied in many pictures we have pre-

viously mentioned. The type chosen for the face is the most sculpturesque of all those he affected, and this picture is the most perfect illustration of it. Chromatically speaking, the work is almost classic in its style. The sumptuous, deep-toned greens of her sleeves accord with the grayer greens of the hangings behind the lady's figure; the tawny gold of her hair encloses clear-cut features of Miss Wilding's type, the carnations of which, although not wan, are but little tinged with the rose, and suggest a life of studious retirement and majestic leisure. The brightness of the music sheet repeats the tonality of the flesh tints, the jonquils on the table are adapted to the colour of the bird. In the like manner the tone and colour schemes of the whole example were constructed in harmonies, and on what may be called musical principles. The general aspect of the picture is that of a Paolo Veronese with the addition of searching execution, or an elaborately-finished Sebastiano which time had not lowered in lighting, tone or tint. This instance of *La Veronica* justifies the motto from 'G. Ridolfi,' '*C'était le mariage des voix de la nature et de l'âme, l'aube d'une création mystique.*' It is one of the last of Rossetti's works of which music suggests the theme." Such is the masterpiece, in the firm and sculpturesque touch of which, as well as in its logical treatment and poetic inspiration, we recognize no sign of decaying powers or weakened will; such is the example the artist called "the fiddle-picture," which at Mr. Leyland's sale fetched a thousand guineas.

Mr. Graham's *La Ghirlandata* (R. A., 1883, No. 298) may fairly take its place with *Dis Manibus*, *The Bride*, and *Lilith*, without being compared with any of them. It shows the green-clad Lady of the Garlands sitting among the golden foliage of a thorn tree and myrtle copse; her hands are drawing music from a harp beside her seat, and her face proved her soul to be absorbed in the sound she produces. On either side, over her shoulders, an angel looks from between the glowing upper leaves of the copse, as if Heaven itself waited upon her song. Round the summit of the harp is slung a garland of roses and honeysuckles, the sweetest of earthly flowers, and the sky above, where the day of earth is dying, hints in its calm, ardent depths of a sweetness still beyond. The evening breeze has just risen and begins to lift the light drapery above her shoulders. In colour, this picture is chiefly a

study of green, interspersed with blue of various shades—the deep blue aconite which appears at the base of the composition, the bright bird that flits through the trees, the wing pattern painted on the instrument, and the colour fading from the sky. These hues are balanced by the golden bronze of the lady's hair and the dusky-coloured harp, an instrument which is solid, with strings on each side.¹

It appears that it was late in 1873 the first idea was suggested to Rossetti of illustrating with a picture his own poem *The Blessed Damozel*, which had originally appeared in the second number of the *Germ*, February, 1850. With this date therefore—although the first of several versions, that bought by Mr. W. Graham, was not available till the following year, while Mr. Leyland's picture had not the final touches till 1879—our illustrations of this stupendous work, are placed here. The picture more particularly illustrates a portion of the poem which appeared in the Tauchnitz edition of Rossetti's works, 1873, and is less known to English readers than either of the other versions. The legend, if such it can be called, which is entirely of the poet-painter's invention, tells us that the "Damozel," dying in the fulness of youth, and before her lover, waited for his coming in Heaven, while her earthly companions, maids and men, were united in perfect bliss. Time passed, and still the lover came not, but she continuously waited :—

" It was the rampart of God's house
That she was standing on ;
By God built over the sheer depth
The which is Space begun ;
So high, that looking downward thence
She scarce could see the sun.

¹ See the *Athenæum*, No. 2494, for the above, and further notes on Rossetti's pictures. Mr. W. Rossetti, the painter's brother, wrote that the flowers prominent in this work are, he thought, larkspurs, though the painter meant to depict monkshood, which is poisonous, and thus intended to suggest this in "Beauty which must die." This intention was not apparent to me in *La Ghirlandata*. My friend adds that, although the artist gave us so many pictures in which the pathetic as well as the poetic qualities of music are illustrated with the rarest subtlety, as of music that "overtakes far thought," he knew nothing of that art as such, and hardly cared to listen to its graver exercises.

* * * *

“Beneath, the tides of day and night
 With flame and darkness ridge
 The void, as low as where this earth
 Spins like a fretful midge.

“Around her, lovers, newly met
 ‘Mid deathless love’s acclaims,
 Spoke evermore among themselves
 Their rapturous new names ;
 And the souls mounting up to God
 Went by her like thin flames.

“And still she bowed herself and stooped
 Out of the circling charm ;
 Until her bosom must have made
 The bar she leaned on warm,
 And the lilies lay as if asleep
 Along her bended arm.

“From the fixèd place of Heaven she saw
 Time like a pulse shake fierce
 Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove
 Within the gulf to pierce
 Its path ; and now she spoke as when
 The stars sang in their spheres.

“The sun was gone now ; the curled moon
 Was like a little feather
 Fluttering far down the gulf ; and now
 She spoke through the still weather.
 Her voice was like the voice the stars
 Had when they sang together.

* * * *

“‘I wish that he were come to me,
 For he will come,’ she said.
 ‘Have I not prayed in Heaven ?—on earth,
 Lord, Lord, has he not pray’d ?
 Are not two prayers a perfect strength ?
 And shall I feel afraid ?’”

Thus yearning, the Damozel prefigures to herself the meeting she craves.

“‘We two,’ she said, ‘will seek the groves
 Where the lady Mary is,

With her five handmaidens, whose names
 Are five sweet symphonies,
 Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
 Margaret and Rosalys.

“Circlewise sit they, with bound locks
 And foreheads garlanded ;
 Into the fine white cloth like flame
 Weaving the golden thread,
 To fashion the birth-robcs for them
 Who are just born, being dead.”

The Blessed Damozel of this picture is of life-size, or a little larger, and, from amid a mass of blooming celestial roses, leans forward on one arm against and over the golden wall or parapet of Heaven, which is enriched with strange sculptures, and gleams in the mystical light of the place. Her loose and ample robe, of a pale cerulean blue, covers her shoulders, and, above this is a scarf of bronze tint, intermixed with silvery hues. The great heavenly lilies of sainthood lie in the hollow of her other arm. Her head is bent forward, and her pure pale face is marked with a love-yearning look in the never-weary, yet wistful eyes, and on her half-open lips sits immovably patient expectation ; her hair is of a deep golden tint, there are purple stars about it, and it seems to flow from under these upon her shoulders and her back in an abundant mass richly lighted. The exaltation of the soul which is expressed by the poem has been made concrete in the features, verifying the charm of the verses :

“The wonder was not yet quite gone
 From that still look of hers ;
 Albeit, to them she left, her day
 Had counted as ten years.”

The still dignity of her attitude is a masterpiece of graceful design, and the lines of the figure are amply supported by the subsidiary elements yet to be described, for the minor incidents of the work confirm the suggestions of the poem.

Behind the Damozel are the large mazes of the heavenly garden, where, under the branches of an enormous tree, numerous re-united lovers, clad in deep blue, are joyfully embracing, and are seen in changing lights and shadows. In front of the golden parapet, and bearing green palms

with which to welcome the lover for whose coming they, like the Damozel wait, are two ministering spirits, both beautiful, but with different expressions on their faces, the one more pitiful and sad than the other, for the



Sancta Liliis, which was founded on The Blessed Damozel.

latter is younger, and his look is less sorrowful. Their intensely blue wings, instinct with latent fires, arch grandly over their heads, as if ready to be expanded in flight, and launch the palm-bearers forth on the

celestial road by which all anticipate the lovers coming. Between these two ministers, and immediately below the shining parapet, appears a seraph, an infant's head surrounded by multiform and manifold wings like those of the tetramorph, and of a deep and vivid green; the face of this presence has a watchful and sad expression; it is the countenance of a fate presaging sorrow and loss even in its steadfast regard and fixed lines.¹

The *Blessed Damsel* is represented here by a reproduction of Rossetti's original design in chalk of a group of "lovers newly met," who appear in the background of Mr. Graham's version of the picture, not in that which Mr. Leyland had. A predella obtains with both examples, although they differ in various details. Several studies of this kind were dispersed at the Rossetti sale, 1883. The same picture is likewise represented by the cut of *Sancta Liliās*, a work which was the property of the late Lord Mount-Temple, and executed in 1874 as the date upon it states. It is a variation, in part, of the bust, hands and head, of the chief figure in the great picture, adapted to suit a differing expression and manner, and named according to the lilies in the maiden's hand. The robe and the background are golden. It was No. 87 at the Burlington Club Exhibition, 1883, where No. 84 was a similar study, belonging to Mr. W. Graham, in red chalk, and holding a palm. A study in red chalk of *Sancta Liliās* was Lot 35 at the Rossetti sale, and dated in the catalogue as of 1879.

Four works distinguished Rossetti's output in art during the year 1875. They are, besides "versions" and portraits as before, *Venus Astarte*, *The Sphinx*, or *The Question*, *Dis Manibus*, and *La Bella Mano*. The first of these, sometimes called *Astarte Syriaca*, a mystically inspired version of Mrs. W. Morris's lineaments, was illustrated by an admirable plate in the *Portfolio* of 1892, the immediate original of which was a chalk drawing, and an historical essay by the present writer. The second example is represented here by a reduction of a pencil drawing, the only one which Rossetti made to carry out an idea of what his biographer calls (in this I cannot agree with him) "one of my brother's most important inventions; he wished," says that loyal critic, "to carry it out as a picture, but found no feasible opportunity for doing

¹ See the *Athenæum*, 1877, No. 2581.

so. On his death-bed he composed two sonnets, as yet unpublished, to illustrate the same idea. In this design the Sphinx represents the mystery of existence, or the destiny of man, unfathomable by himself. Three personages—a youth, a man of mature age, and an old man—are shown as coming to the secret haunt of the Sphinx, to consult her as to the



Two Figures Embracing, from The Blessed Damozel.

arcana of Fate. The man is putting his question ; the graybeard toils upward towards the spot ; the youth, exhausted by his journey, sinks and dies, unable so much as to give words to the object of his quest. With upward and inscrutable eyes the Sphinx remains impenetrably silent.”¹

¹ The fraternal biographer continues, “It may be worthy of mention that, in representing the dying stripling, Rossetti was thinking of the premature fate of Oliver Madox

La bella Mano belongs to Mr. F. S. Ellis, who lent it to the Academy in 1883, No. 35. Here, the Lady with the Fine Hands, is washing them at a cistern and basin of brass, while two white-robed and red-winged Loves are in attendance, one holding the towel in readiness, the other having on a silver tray the adornments for her "bella mano." A mirror behind her head reflects the room and bed; these elements are deep in tone; a fire is burning in the chimney nook. The pictorial object of the work is to show the brilliancy of flesh tints, or carnations and whites relieved on a ground subdued to the eye, and yet everywhere replete with varied colour and material. In these respects the work is a marvel of art, the whole glowing in rich light, and being intensely deep in tone, and wealthy in colour. The sentiment of the design, as in most of Rossetti's pictures, lies in the face, and is discoverable in the light of a woman's hope, which fills the eyes, and has given a warmer rose tint to the full and slightly parted lips, that are red in their vitality. The face is slightly raised, and put sideways towards us, the figure standing in profile, so that the masses of deep golden hair which project from her brow, cast shadows on her upper features.

Dis Manibus, or *The Roman Widow*, I describe from notes made in Rossetti's studio in 1875, and published in the *Athenæum* of that year, soon after it was finished. The title here suggests the subject, that of a Roman widow seated in the funeral vault of her family, beside her husband's cinerary urn, the inscription on which is headed by the invariable words "Dis Manibus." She, as in some classical examples, is playing on two harps an elegy "To the Divine Manes" of the departed. She is robed in white, the mourning of noble ladies in Rome. The antique forms of the harps are rendered in tortoiseshell chiefly, with

Brown, a youth of singular promise, both as painter and as writer, who ended his brief life of less than twenty years in the November of 1874—a bitter grief to his father, Rossetti's life-long friend, Ford Madox Brown. This design Rossetti characteristically wrote of as being meant to be a sort of painted *Cloud Confines* (the name will be recognized as that of one of his poems). "I don't know," he added, "whether it would do to paint, being moonlight." The *Sphinx* seems to me an intractable subject, and to be overloaded with trite allegory that is unworthy of the inventor of so many subtleties, while the design, as such, is inferior and confused, and therefore, apart from the moonlight which would have to be dealt with, I am convinced that it would not "do to paint."

fillings of ebony or dark horn embossed in silver. She is seated right fronting us, and leans a little sideways to our left. On this side one of



The Sphinx.

the harps is reared on the arm of the bench, its horns are twined with pale wild roses, and beneath the urn is trained a festoon of garden roses. About the urn is bound the widow's wedding girdle of silver, dedicated

to the dead or to the living husband. The second harp is on the bench on her left ; her lean pale fingers seem to stray "preluding" a mournful strain upon the strings of the instruments, and her very eyes seem to listen ; her lips we might expect would part and emit a faint funereal hymn. The moment chosen must be supposed to belong to one of those special occasions when the Romans solemnized mortuary rites, and which recurred at intervals during the year. The key colour of this picture is warm white, with a saffron hue ; this obtained in the dress of the lady, and is varied by the less warm colour of the veil which swathes her head and throat, as well as by the intense pallor of the carnations. She has turned back the veil from her face so that we see the warm young features are sunken, a little pale, but still beautiful.

The Sea Spell, painted from Miss Wilding, and intended as a sort of companion to *Veronica Veronese*, for which she likewise sat, shows the Siren seated playing her lute, which is shadowed by the apple-tree and crowned with a rose-wreath. She is bending before the instrument which is upright before her ; over her head is a white bird, attracted by the music and rushing through the air to listen to it. Behind are glimpses of the sunlit ocean and a blue firmament, vividly lighted. The witch is with abstracted eyes listening to her own music, and the vague charm of her ruddy lips seems to attest that she, urged by Fate, wove the enchantment that brought mariners to ruin, while she swings her body to the chanted cadence. Rossetti's sonnet illustrating this picture¹ begins

"Her lute hangs shadowed on the apple tree
While flashing fingers weave the sweet-strung spell
Between its chords."

The portrait of *Miss Christina Rossetti*, which is the last of our illustrations, belongs to the one brother, to whom we are indebted for it as well as for the plate after *Lilith*, and was drawn by the other brother of the lady whose choice verses have been, like so many pearls in a carcanet, strung in various editions of her poems. It will therefore be trebly welcome to the reader. It was drawn with coloured crayons, and in, to the best of my belief, 1877 ; in 1883 it appeared as No. 43 at

¹ The *Sea-Spell*, which belonged to Mr. Leyland, and was sold with the rest of his pictures in May, 1892, for 420 guineas, was dated 1877, and exhibited at the Burlington Club in 1883.

the Burlington Club's exhibition of Rossetti's pictures, drawings, and studies. It attests that Time had not effaced from the lady's face the likeness of the Virgin in "*Ecce Ancilla Domini!*" of 1849, and it remains



Christina Rossetti.

the best portrait of our poet-painter's devoted and constant sister, his refuge in dark and painful days which she shared with his mother and brother, and one of the attendants of his latest hours.

Those hours witnessed the removal from amongst us of one of the most splendid geniuses of which the English nation can boast. They arrived all too soon after the portrait of his sister was completed, that is in about four years, during which period Rossetti finished some less important works, replicas and new versions of several which have been mentioned in this text, and began certain examples which he did not live to complete. He had the great satisfaction of knowing that his fame as a poet was prodigiously extended by means of *Ballads and Sonnets*, published in September, 1881, while the sale in the same month of his *Dante's Dream* to the Liverpool Gallery affirmed that his honours as a painter would lose nothing in the future. It would have increased his happiness could he have known that in a few years two of the most characteristic of his pictures would be added to the National Gallery. He died at Birchington, Kent, on the 9th of April, 1882. To his memory this text is one of the tributes of an old friend.



Beatrice and her Nurse.

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In an Orchard.

FREDERICK WALKER

AND HIS WORKS

By

CLAUDE PHILLIPS

Author of "Sir Joshua Reynolds," &c.



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FREDERICK WALKER

CHAPTER I

Influence on English Art—Early Years—As a Wood-engraver—Connection with the “Cornhill”—Works in Black and White—Illustrations for Thackeray’s “Philip”—First Oil Painting—Visit to Paris—Influence of French Art.

It is now some nineteen years since the career of this lamented artist was all too prematurely brought to a close. He vanished out of life at a moment when glory had already been achieved, and achieved by a road less barred by obstacle than that which artists of genius are as a rule compelled to follow, but yet at a point when he was far from having reached maturity or given the best that it was in him to give. The sentiment of poignant regret so universally felt at his death was made up on the one hand of infinite pity for the path-breaking painter who had won and grasped the crown of victory only to see it fall from his darkening eyes—on the other of bitter disappointment that the English school should, at a perilous moment, be deprived of one who might have accomplished for it so much more than in his short life he was able to do.

The disappearance of Walker was not only the disappearance of a man of mark, whose pathetic and distinctively English art had already won the hearts of the outside public not less than the sympathy of that more restricted one which judges the painter’s art primarily from its own standpoint and only secondarily from that of imaginative literature. It was the extinction of a budding school, or at any rate of a movement of promise in English art,

which, whatever might be its shortcomings, had that special quality, the value of which cannot well be overrated, that it remained in its innovations national in feeling and character. The electric spark giving life and the power of development to the germ might have come—it probably did come—from abroad, yet the art thus generated was never deliberately imitative, but on the contrary evolved itself in accordance with the natural temperament and according to the natural resources of the artist. Three years before Walker died, George Mason, a more complete artist, so far as technical achievement goes, though perhaps not a more convincing artistic personality than our painter, had passed away; a few months afterwards vanished George Pinwell, the survivor of the short-lived group, and Walker's junior by more than two years.

Walker's influence on his younger contemporaries was undoubtedly very great, and its traces still survive, especially among our water-colour painters. Still that influence, instead of growing in the years that have elapsed since his death, has by degrees waned; what might have developed into a school has remained an isolated movement, throwing out ramifications here and there, but yet not more than a movement. This is the more to be regretted, because the English art of to-day, interesting as are its most recent manifestations in every direction—undoubtedly as it is now showing itself to be alive, as it is asserting its right to a place in what may be called the modern European school, radiating from France—is taking its aids to development too much from without, too little from within. It is to the relative immaturity of Walker's art, to its lack of true vitality in its later and more ambitious phases, that is perhaps to be attributed the restricted character of its influence.

All the more do we regret that possibilities so great as those foreshadowed in the art of our painter and his fellows were not realised to the full, when we remember how a generation earlier, another and a far more important movement, that of the band of poetic realists calling themselves the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, failed to bring to ripeness such fruit as it might have been expected to bear. Here not death so much as disintegration was the cause. The intense passion, the concentrated subjectivity of Rossetti, saved in early days from excess

by its human quality, by the touch of the higher realism which informed it, in the end overpowered and obliterated the truth, upon a solid contact with which all enduring art must be based. The splendid achievements of the youthful Millais, absorbing and giving back with infinitely greater technical skill some of the brightest rays of his companions' genius, were continued, but in another form. The technique broadened, and the Pre-Raphaelite passed the barriers which separated imaginative immaturity from more mature but also more prosaic achievement. Mr. Holman Hunt was faithful, as he has ever since remained, to his early ideals, and naively sincere, with a *naïveté* and simplicity hardly paralleled in his century; but the very defects of his qualities prevented his pathetic and curious art from progressing to a higher than the initial stage, or exercising any widespread influence outside the fringe of Pre-Raphaelitism. When Walker's light first modestly showed itself above the horizon, the movement was already approaching the end of its earlier, its more vigorous and less literary stage. He cannot be said to have been closely in touch with it, save in so far as he was evidently moved by a sincerity, by a desire to stand alone, which may well have caused to vibrate certain kindred chords in his own nature. Almost from the first he sought to do as the fiery young innovators of that small earnest band had done in the beginning—to shake himself free from the accumulated conventionalities of the worst kind by which the majority of English artists were still well-nigh stifled. His supreme merit was that, while remaining open to impulse from without, when that impulse ran parallel with his own endeavour, he chose—perhaps his artistic temperament left him no choice—to see, feel, and interpret humanity and the enviring nature for himself, and not merely to tread the narrow path, worn hard and bare by his predecessors and contemporaries.

The cheap anecdotic phase of romanticism had, notwithstanding the earnest efforts of the Pre-Raphaelites in the direction of a higher and simpler truth, maintained a firm hold on English art. Walker's tendency from the beginning, whether he was wholly conscious of it or not, was to replace this romanticism by a realism tempered with that peculiar vein of imaginativeness without which it can never be acceptable in the long run to the Englishman. It was the opportuneness of his

appearance, the opportuneness of his attempt, the fact that the art of the innovator, however tentative and uncertain it might be in many respects, was a thing of home growth and national in colour, that made his success, and caused it to be more immediate and less chequered with the shadow of failure than is usual with artists of Walker's stamp.

The peculiarly sympathetic character, the absolute sincerity of all his work, even when it was most open to technical criticism, had early in his too short career won over not only the art-loving section of the public, but the greater number and the better part of his brothers in art. When following, alas ! too closely, on still growing success, and the achievement of coveted distinction, came abruptly the final catastrophe, the bitterness of regret gave an additional impulse to that success, the seal to which was set by the posthumous exhibition of the painter's collected works in 1876 some few months after his death. This was for Walker a veritable apotheosis, and it brought his reputation to a level at which it has maintained itself ever since, if we may judge not only by the market-prices of his works—for these manifestly furnish but an unsafe criterion—but by the place which has, with but few dissident voices, been accorded to him among the brightest lights of English art.

In the last years of his life, and in those which followed immediately upon his death much sympathetic and appreciative criticism was devoted to the analysis of his life-work, to the exposition of his tendencies in art, to the tracing of points of contact and points of difference between his productions and those of contemporary foreign masters who might fairly be deemed to have influenced him. It would have been too ungrateful a task at such a moment to show the shortcomings and weaknesses of a method which was avowedly not yet mature when he was snatched away, or to point out in what it might appear, to one judging dispassionately, to be an art rather of promise than of performance. It is now, perhaps, after a lapse of nearly two decades easier to make such an attempt, although it is difficult at this stage to do what no one appears to have done at the time—that is to indicate with any attempt at realistic truth the human as well as the artistic personality of our painter. It thus becomes necessary, in any

attempted appreciation to rely almost wholly on what remains of the artist, and but little on the scanty data which have been made public with reference to the man.¹

Frederick Walker was born in Marylebone, on the 26th of May, 1840, his father being a designer of artistic jewellery, with a taste also for painting, which descended, it would appear, from our artist's grandfather, who was responsible for some creditable family portraits. His mother recognized early his more than common talent for drawing, and while he was yet going through a course of general education at the North London Collegiate School, Camden Town, took some of his drawings to Mr. Arthur J. Lewis, of Moray Lodge, Campden Hill, in the employment of whose firms he then was. This gentleman, himself a practised artist, at once perceived the promise of the youthful draughtsman, and recommended that he should be allowed to follow his bent and make of art the business of his life. He had already begun to draw in the halls of the British Museum when, at the age of sixteen he was, by way of trial placed for eighteen months with an architect and surveyor. Very naturally the mechanical training which he there had to undergo, and the routine tasks to which perforce he had to apply himself were little to his taste. So soon as he was released from his experimental apprenticeship, he returned with added enthusiasm to his more congenial artistic training, working in the daytime at the Museum among the Elgin Marbles, and at night attending Leigh's life classes in Newman Street. These Elgin Marbles, of which later on he had casts placed in his studio, so that they were always in his sight, left, as will be seen, an indelible impression on his art, and more especially on its later phases. In March, 1858, he was admitted as a student at the Royal Academy, but he never progressed from the antique to the life school there.

Mr. J. L. Roget, in his concise and interesting notice of the painter, contained in the work to which reference has already been made, states that his studies from the life were made not from the model, but from what he saw around him in the outer world, of which, in its everyday manifestations, he was, as might easily be inferred from his early performances, keenly and sympathetically observant. A large number of fancy designs,

¹ J. L. Roget's *History of the Old Water Colour Society*, Vol. II., pp. 386—396.

made without any living model—memory coming to the aid of imagination—were done at a sketching club which met at Langham Chambers. These are described as “mostly done in grey with a brush, over unobtrusive but exquisite lines in pencil.” While still a student at the Royal Academy, Walker entered upon a three years engagement with T. W. Whymper, the wood-engraver, to attend his studio three days a week, and draw on the block under his instruction. It was this branch of his artistic training which was earliest to bear fruit, and to enable him to make a practical start in his career; and here his own unaided studies and observation of his fellow-man were to stand him in good stead. The study of classical sculpture which was at the root of his training was not to bear obvious fruit until later on.

Mr. J. Comyns Carr, who has made an especial study of the art of Walker, in one of his numerous essays¹ on what has evidently been with him a favourite subject, describes this period of the young aspirant's life as one of unceasing and irksome labour. He was required for obvious reasons to do his work rapidly and in accordance with a method prescribed by the taste of his master's customers—that is, in the conventional book-illustration style which obtained before that of Millais and Walker himself got the upper hand, before the rise of *Once a Week* and the *Cornhill Magazine*. No doubt such labour was distasteful to young Walker, as it must be distasteful to any artist of creative impulses. On the other hand, it must have contributed to give him certainty and precision of hand, though it did not correct that deep-rooted tendency of the artist to hesitate, to evolve, to elaborate, which had its great drawbacks as well as its advantages. Originality of vision, distinctiveness of style are not qualities which the young and imperfectly developed artist can possess at the outset, whatever may be his possibilities; and it is more than probable that this rough-and-ready training after all did the artist more good than harm. We are reminded of Watteau in his early 'prentice days, when bound to a kind of purveyor of cheap art destined to be exported in every direction, he was compelled to turn out by the dozen *images de piété*—Holy Infants, Madonnas, angels, saints, monks, and demons. This early apprenticeship of our painter to the wood-engraver determined, however, the branch of art in which he was first to essay his flight, and no doubt, as

¹ *Essays on Art*, by J. Comyns Carr.

Mr. Comyns Carr points out, exercised a permanent influence upon his work even as a painter—an influence from which, like even the mighty Albert Dürer, the painter-engraver, but even more the engraver-painter, he was never wholly able to shake himself free.

The periodical *Once a Week* had been founded in 1859, and attached to its staff were, among other artists of reputation, J. E. Millais, T. Sandys, John Leech, Charles Keene, and John Tenniel. In November 1859, Walker divining here, as it is permissible to surmise, a unique opportunity for remunerative work and self-development side by side with men who had already won for themselves a name, ventured in some trepidation to call upon the editor of the new periodical to exhibit specimens of his work and seek employment as a draughtsman on wood. Tom Taylor,¹ who describes him at this point as “a nervous, timid, sensitive young fellow, frail and small of body, feverish of temperament, but ever prompt and bright of wit,” goes on to say, “They (the drawings) were examined, approved, and a commission was given him to illustrate a story called *Peasant Proprietorship*, which appeared with the nervous young artist’s illustration in the number for February 18th, 1860.”

It has been ascertained, however, that it was in a paper called *Everybody’s Journal* that the very first in order of date of Walker’s drawings came before the public. This was an illustration to a tale by Edmond About, entitled in its English dress, *The Round of Wrong*, and it saw the light on January 14th, 1860.

From that time to March, 1863, he was a constant contributor to *Once a Week*. He was responsible for twenty-four drawings in the two volumes for 1860; twenty-nine in those for 1861; and twenty in those for 1862; while in 1863 he contributed a solitary design for *After Ten Years*, the translation of a little poem by Geibel. This showed an elderly wayfarer, who, reappearing after a ten years absence clasps his sister in his arms, while her little ones look on wonderingly. The drawings of the preceding years chiefly illustrate two serial stories, *The Settlers of the Long Arrow* and *The Prodigal Son*. Somewhere at the end of 1860, or beginning of 1861, Walker obtained an introduction, through Mr. George Smith, to Thackeray, then editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*, and the

¹ Preface to the *Catalogue of the Exhibition of Works of the late F. Walker, A.R.A.*, 1876.

chief mainstay among its contributors.¹ "Walker was nervous, and Thackeray after his own fashion strove to set him at his ease. He asked him if he could sketch. . . . and suggested that he should make a sketch of him while he was shaving. This Walker accomplished, and the result was so far satisfactory that at their next interview Thackeray told him that he wanted a drawing for one of the famous 'Roundabout Papers.' He indicated what was required in a rough sketch. . . . The principal figure was to be a back view of Thackeray himself, which Walker straightway executed by way of a preliminary study, and then afterwards embodied in the finished design engraved for the magazine."

The rough sketch, or rather suggestion, for the composition as a whole was, however, on this occasion, supplied by Thackeray himself, a plan which he adopted also in the first drawings executed by Walker under his supervision for *Philip on his Way through the World*, then coming out in the *Cornhill*. This particular sketch, which has been in several Walker exhibitions, and most recently of all in the comprehensive display of his minor works brought together by the Royal Society of Artists of Birmingham, this spring, belongs to the great writer's daughter, Mrs. Richmond Ritchie. It is infinitely more spirited and suggestive than the finished vignette which appeared accompanying the "Roundabout Paper" of February 1861, in the magazine. It has, indeed, just that freedom and spontaneity which in Walker's finished performances—be they in black-and-white, oils, or water-colours—is so often obliterated and replaced by a loving elaboration of subject and detail which has its characteristic charm, but also, as will be seen, its great dangers. Walker takes Thackeray's place as the illustrator-in-chief of *Philip* in the number of the *Cornhill* for May 1861 (with the cut "Nurse and Doctor"), and thenceforward supplies the accompanying designs until the story ends in August 1862. The first cuts are unsigned, but at about the point indicated the initials "F. W.," which were to remain Walker's artistic signature, appear modestly in the corner, and this is no doubt intended to mark the draughtsman's emancipation from leading strings. We know that sometimes when Thackeray was ill in bed, and yet obliged to remain at the helm, he would send for his young protégé, and making him sit down at the bedside, relate the story to him

¹ J. Comyns Carr, *Essays on Art*.

as it developed itself, so as to call up before his eyes the scenes fixed upon for illustration.

It is a little difficult just now to appreciate at their true worth these illustrations of Walker's to *Philip*, much as it is to see the real merit of John Everett Millais's pictures in black and white to Anthony Trollope's too little remembered novel, *Framley Parsonage*. The



Pencil Drawing made for the "Cornhill Magazine."

period which both had to illustrate was, as regards externals, a most unfortunate one. The men trimmed (or rather did not trim) their hair and whiskers in a fashion abhorrent to the present generation ; their hats, their clothes—even those of the dandies—were, according to present notions, the very essence of unsmartness. The women were, as to their coiffures, their head-gear, their toilette generally, the dowdiest of the

dowdy, and their balloon-like skirts, unrelieved by the festoons and adornments which had rendered acceptable those still ampler ones of the eighteenth century, were of a hopelessly inexpressive monotony and vulgarity with which not even the most gifted draughtsman might hope to deal with success. And then the period represented is still so near to us that the artist's personages appear frumpy and out of date, without getting the benefit of a certain quaintness and unfamiliarity which by association lend charm to things even uncouth and ugly, if only they be sufficiently distant and sufficiently characteristic of the time to which they belong. The defects of Walker's illustrations are in a great measure those inherent in the externals of the scenes which he undertakes to depict. The ungainly garments and surroundings of his figures often overcome him, and he has not, though his drawings vastly improve both in conception and technique as he goes on, the supreme graphic skill which would enable him to rise superior to such disheartening obstacles.

The merit of the *Philip* illustrations lies, as might have been expected, in what was very nearly a first work, less in well-ordered and concentrated design emphasizing the essential and relegating to the background the unessential points of a subject, than in the pathos and truth, the unquestioning simplicity and sincerity of the whole. Thackeray's humour and satire are much less easily within Walker's reach than his pure pathos. It is in depicting the more serious scenes of the novel that he penetrates into the very heart of his subject, and divines, with an intuition rare indeed in so young an artist, the innermost meaning of the great humourist—causing his creations to stand out still more clearly, instead of blurring and confusing them, as many even of the most gifted among illustrators are wont to do. As in the book itself, so in the drawings, a thrill of human tenderness colours and transfigures the whole. It would be an exaggeration to say that Thackeray, the keenest satirist, but also the most genial humourist of his time, is as adequately interpreted as Thackeray, the tear-compelling narrator of the least romantic incidents in English life. To suggest his satire, and what those imperfectly in touch with his art are pleased to style his cynicism, would require the mordant pencil of an Adolf Menzel, with a far bigger dose redeeming humanity than that most masterly of all modern draughtsmen commands.

No one possessed what after his time it has become the fashion to

style the religion of humanity more deeply and truly or more unaffectedly than Thackeray ; and he was never really without pity and pardon even for the most imperfect of the human creatures whose foibles he so unsparingly laid bare. It is here that his youthful illustrator intuitively divines and expresses him. Take for instance the central figure of Philip himself—great, rough, kindly Philip, so loving and so lovable—how admirably and consistently he is expressed throughout ! How faithfully his ill-made baggy clothes, his bushy mane and whiskers are portrayed, and how unmistakably the typical Briton, in his nobler phase, shines out through it all ! With hardly less truth and pathos are the simplicity and purity of English womanhood, the wistfulness of childhood portrayed. The drawing of *Philip in Church* has become famous, especially in its later version, when elaborated as a water-colour. Notable, too, as illustrating the vein of true sentiment without sentimentality which gives distinction to the whole series, are *At the Sick Man's Door*, *Paterfamilias*, *Comfort in Grief*. The design *Charlotte's Convoy* reveals an unlooked-for subtlety and sense of values in the use of black and white, atmospheric gradation and the clearness of a starlit night being modestly but most truthfully conveyed. *A Quarrel* and *Judith and Holofernes* are powerfully yet not stagily dramatic ; the latter, however, with all the vigour of its realism is in a somewhat more heroic vein than the subject calls for.

It is the touchingly human quality, the subtle, unobtrusive observation, bringing out spiritual rather than purely physical characteristics, which gives value to these and other early productions of Frederick Walker. Later on when—a new impulse reviving and giving added force to the early impressions received from a rudimentary study of Greek sculpture—the art of the painter develops decorative elements and a certain ambitious classicality in the presentment of everyday life, the poetic realism, the unobtrusive fidelity in the observation and interpretation of fact are obscured, though not obliterated. Whether the gain in the one direction counterbalances the loss or diminution in the other remains to be seen ; this side of the question must be left for discussion a little further on.

After Thackeray's *Philip* our artist illustrated successively Miss Thackeray's *Story of Elizabeth* and *The Village on the Cliff*, succeeding



At the Sick Man's Door.

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hardly less well with the delicately outlined figures of the daughter than with the vividly realised creations of the father.

Walker also supplied the drawings for Thackeray's unfinished novel *Denis Duval*, and here he was evidently much less at his ease. It was almost the only instance in which he had to deal with costumes and personages earlier than those of this century, and—in this the antithesis of those artists of whom Meissonier is the type and the most accomplished instance—he was hampered, not stimulated, by the conditions of the task imposed upon him. There is something forced, something approaching mannerism and sentimentality even in the prettiest of these drawings, though they are in a style more calculated to secure popular appreciation than the previous ones. Among the most notable is *Denis Duval's Valet*, with its engaging but not quite simple portraiture of the steadfast, much-suffering little hero—just a little too *contourné*, both in conception and style. The same criticism may fairly be applied to the animated composition, *Little Denis Dances and Sings before the Navy Gentlemen*, while the *Last Moments of the Count of Saverne* is well put together and impressive, but inclines to the stage-dramatic rather than to the drama of reality.

Mr. J. L. Roget has stated that Walker built up his distinctive manner as a draughtsman for wood-engraving, partly on the wood-drawing of Adolf Menzel, whose famous series of illustrations dealing with Frederick the Great and his campaigns was, it appears, much studied by him—partly on the new style and practice introduced by Millais and the Pre-Raphaelites, but with less of hard insistence and more freedom and grace than the latter could command. Certainly if the influence of Menzel is anywhere visible in Walker's black-and-white work, it is in these illustrations to *Denis Duval*. But as a rule that swiftness and supreme mastery of pencil applied to the precise notation of fact, that *crânerie* of the elder master which, if it does not unnecessarily set up never shirks difficulties, are just the qualities which we do not, as a rule, find in our artist. With much more truth may it be asserted that Walker's art at this initial stage is more or less the outcome of that of Millais and the Pre-Raphaelites. If any English artist can be said to have exercised a direct influence over him, it is certainly Millais—the Millais of the first Pre-Raphaelite period at its maturity. But Walker,



Denis Duvall's Valet.

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not less as an artist than as a man, was essentially self-developed—a true product of his time, but yet isolated from his predecessors and fellow-workers as have been very few even among painters of undoubted initiative and originality. Once fairly started he owed much less to his contemporaries, whether English or French, than has been imagined, and to ancient art other than classical sculpture, nothing.

This attitude of aloofness is to be noted neither all in praise nor all in blame ; it is the natural outcome of Walker's temperament, of his apparently limited power of appreciating such art as was outside the bounds of his own immediate sympathies. It is the result of his absolute self-concentration, and his curious system of slowly, laboriously working up artistic material. Important determining impulses from without he certainly received at more than one point in his career, and in submitting to these he but followed the natural and, indeed, one may say, inevitable order in which a true creative personality, such as his, develops itself. If, without descending to mere imitation, he had shown himself more capable of assimilating the technical results achieved by others, he might have glided more easily over many a stumbling-block, and attained to that perfect, unfettered expression of self which, as it is, he cannot be said to have reached.

Besides *Once a Week* and the *Cornhill* our artist did work in these years for *Good Words*, *Sunday at Home*, and other magazines.

It is during this period that he executed for Messrs. Dalziel his drawings of the Seasons, which are of especial interest as affording elements of comparison with the later versions of the same subjects amplified in his more elaborate style. *Spring* shows with true tenderness and simplicity a girl and boy gathering primroses in a thicket blossoming already, although its branches are still naked and gaunt. *Summer*, a truly Pre-Raphaelite performance in its literalness and naive truth, presents two boys bathing in a pool overhung with trees. It has been pointed out that here we have the original motive out of which grew, first a water-colour in which the figures are more numerous and the design takes a more graceful shape, then one of the artist's most important works, *The Bathers* of 1867. *Autumn* shows a girl in an orchard, standing under a still leafy apple-tree laden with fruit ; one of these she has plucked and holds in her hand. The design of *Winter* is



Little Denis Dances and Sings before the Navy Gentlemen.
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more restricted and prosaic in conception ; it gives us, much as one of William Hunt's water-colours might have done, only with a certain pensiveness in lieu of jollity, a boy standing at a frozen pump, with a half-bitten piece of bread-and-butter in his hand. In *Spring*, the differences between the earlier and simpler drawing and the later and more developed one, as it appeared, a water-colour of important dimensions, at the Royal Society of Painters in Water-Colours, are particularly striking and instructive. The first *Spring* is a shade stiff, but it is true in gesture and movement—as delicately as accurately observed. The second, more picturesque and decorative in design, is less immediately based on Nature, and therefore less truly expressive. There is something forced and very nearly artificial in the grace of the child's movements, something of that *contourné* quality in the design, upon which there has once before been occasion to remark. The *Autumn* is already a little over-studied in the first rendering ; its expressiveness cannot be said to be enhanced in the subsequent and more elaborate version.

Mr. Comyns Carr has in his already more than once quoted essay dwelt with evident sympathy on this peculiar quality of Walker's ; this constant attraction exercised over him by his earliest motives, this system of returning to them over and over again, to change, to amplify, to adorn with the fruits of a passionate and sustained study of Nature in her minutest details. While, however, inventions such as those of our painter may gain in studied grace and ideality, in maturity of conception and richness of amassed detail, by a gradual process of elaboration and completion such as that to which he submitted them, they must necessarily lose in spontaneity and freshness, in swiftness and truth of delineation. It is not easy with such a system to retain that indefinable quality which suggests the instantaneous vision of the painter, seeing his subject complete in essentials ere he attacks it. Over-elaboration—the working out of a subject as it were from different centres instead of as one coherent, dramatic whole—is precisely the drawback from which Walker's art most suffers. His method of progressive development well accounts for the mixed feeling with which we contemplate precisely those works by which his fame has been won ; for the difficulty which, while admiring exquisite episodes in these, we feel in grasping them in their entirety ; for the lack of that current of vitality which should hold together the

component parts of a great work and give it both pictorial and dramatic unity.

It may be as well to deal here with a notable instance in point, though somewhat out of its proper chronological order. There is, perhaps, in the whole range of Walker's *œuvre* no design more forcible, more masterly in its absolute grasp of nature, than the little-known etching *The Wayfarers*. The suggestion of onward movement, the characterisation of the two figures—that of the sturdy, youthful rustic, no less than that of the



The Wayfarers.

old and disabled peasant of forbidding aspect who leans on him for support—is perfect. The landscape is certainly more prosaic and less attractive than in the later version—the large canvas of the same name and subject which dates from 1866, and was last seen in public this winter at the Old Masters' Exhibition. This latter landscape with its late autumn melancholy, its moist atmosphere, its maze of tangled branches and twigs nearly stripped of their leaves, is one of the painter's most elaborate and beautiful transcriptions from nature. The figures, however, will not bear comparison with the singular

and more realistic ones of the etching. A sort of pseudo-idealism has been at work sentimentalising them at the expense of the unvarnished truth which, as we may guess, appeared to the artist too prosaic for perpetuation on a large scale. The pretty youth who supports and guides the steps of a vagrant, of milder but less probable mien than that of his predecessor, skates rather than walks on the down-hill road; an air of weak, sweetened semi-realism pervades the whole, and in this instance individual truth is sacrificed, but general truth is not attained in a compensatory degree. The etching not having been published during the painter's lifetime, it is not easy to fix the exact date of its execution. Still it is manifest that it rests upon a design which must, from its very nature, have preceded that of the finished picture in oils.

Among the designs for wood-engraving executed in these early years (about 1863) must be particularly noted *The Dame's School*, which in the drawing on the block, still intact,¹ is much finer than in the published version. This is a typical example of Walker's happy treatment in early days of the simplest of everyday subjects. Here he does not distort his theme, or force into it more than it can well bear. He preserves intact all significant fact, but transfigures it by the glow of his ardent sympathy. Still a little stiff and hesitating in the working out, the composition is finely and evenly balanced, well observed in all its parts, and its unity remains unimpaired.

While working for bread and butter at his black-and-white work, Walker was learning to paint, both in oils and water-colours, though whether his self-education in these directions was assisted by any regular tuition does not sufficiently appear. His first important essay in oils was the canvas *The Lost Path*, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1863, and though there skied—as the first production of an unknown man painting in an unfamiliar way may often happen to be—attracted considerable notice and praise. Judging by the powerful etching of Mr. Waltner—the writer cannot call to mind to have seen the picture itself—the design is one of the most convincing, one of the most

¹ This drawing for wood-engraving, which was shown at the Paris Exhibition of 1878, has recently been acquired, together with those of *Autumn* and a few subjects from Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, for the Print Room of the British Museum. The South Kensington Museum has the similar drawing for *The Fishmonger*, and the wood-block for *Summer* above described.

concise and natural in its strength that Walker produced. A woman caught in a snowstorm, which has made of the cross-country path a trackless drift, presses on swiftly, holding her sleeping child wrapped from harm in her shawl; her half-seen face, as she closely presses the precious burden to her bosom, shows courage to fight for life, yet withal but little hope.

It was in August, 1863, after sending in this maiden work in oils to the Royal Academy, that Walker made a first visit to Paris in the company of his friend Mr. Philip Calderon (now R.A.), who, our painter being all guiltless of French, agreed to pilot him round the sister city and show him the artistic lions.

Mr. Calderon notes that, so far as he could judge from appearances, Walker remained but little moved in the presence of even the greatest masterpieces of the Louvre, no single picture attracting his attention sufficiently to induce him to speak of it afterwards.

One great canvas, however, the *Sacre de l'Impératrice Joséphine* by David, then in the museum at Versailles, but within the last few years removed thence to the Louvre, quite fascinated him. Mr. Calderon says: "He kept us a long time in the room studying the picture from corner to corner, and when we at last left it, he gave us the slip and ran back to it, and was with difficulty got away." At first, there seems to be an irreconcilable anomaly in the fact of Walker, the tender, the homely, the child of to-day, bowing down before the stern Græco-Roman David, when neither Raphael, Titian, nor Rembrandt had succeeded in moving him. There is however in the central group of David's great work, showing Joséphine in the elegant half-classic costume of the moment, with her imperial robes upheld by the fairest ladies of her court, a perfection of balance, a suavity and a stately grace which must have called up reminiscences of that early classic training among the marbles of Greece and Rome of which the influence was before long to re-assert itself so strongly. Of still higher interest is it to learn from the same informant that at the Luxembourg it was Jules Breton with his *Fin de la Journée*, and not Delacroix, Couture, or any of the more full-blown glories of the century, who attracted our painter's notice.¹ On the occasion of this his

¹ An amusing caricature by Walker, which we might well have assumed to be the outcome of this first trip to Paris, were it not stated on good authority that this is not

first visit to Paris in 1863, it by no means follows as a matter of course that he had an opportunity of seeing any original work by Jean-François Millet, who, although he had at that date already produced his greatest masterpieces, was still hotly discussed in Paris, and by no means definitively accepted on all sides. Had our artist waited for the Salon of 1863, which there is no reason to suppose that he did, he would have had an opportunity of seeing the immortal *L'Homme à la Houe*, than which no work of the French master was on its first appearance more passionately praised or more unsparingly attacked. There is much in Jules Breton's serene melancholy never quite reaching the verge of sadness, in the idyllic grace which he infuses into modern rustic life, which must have appealed to Walker even more than the noble generalisations and the massive grandeur of Millet.¹ One must, however, listen to his friend's wise note of warning, and refrain from drawing absolutely hard-and-fast conclusions from Walker's silence about art, and questions connected with it. He was, we are told "the most silent man I have ever known—never joining in a discussion, but listening (with a twinkle in his eye) to what others said, without ever giving a clue to his own opinions, and ending generally by heartily laughing at both sides." Mr. Calderon's conclusion, to which much weight must attach, as that of a brother artist and friend who lived some years in close intimacy with our painter, is that neither French nor indeed English art had any lasting influence on him. Yet, judging Walker by his works and the course taken by his art in unfolding itself—reasoning too, by analogy with the early developments of even the most original genius—this must appear a somewhat exaggerated statement of his position. True, it may be safely said that hardly any modern English artist of mark has so little belonged to a definite group or school ; yet it is evident—the remark has already been made here—that the English downrightness, the

the case, is the pen-and-ink drawing *Doing Paris : the Last Day* (collection of Mr. W. H. Hooper), showing our artist in his shirt-sleeves lying exhausted on his French bed, while a companion, whose face is effectually hidden, sits at ease, deep in the *Times*. This sketch is drawn on some notepaper marked with the heading of the Hotel Rastadt.

¹ Yet more strongly was the exquisite art of George Mason, while it showed on the one hand strong affinities with that of the Italian landscape painter, Costa, influenced by that of Jules Breton ; as may be clearly seen, for instance, in one of his masterpieces, *The Evening Hymn*.

sincerity and pathos of John Everett Millais in his first manner deeply affected him, and left an easily recognizable trace on the art of his earlier time.

Though it is emphatically untrue that Walker, save perhaps in one or two exceptional instances, deliberately imitated French art, or in any way "Frenchified" himself, it may very fairly be inferred that from the contemplation of such works as those of Jules Breton and Millet, he received a new impulse. May not such an impulse have revived his dormant classical reminiscences, and opened his eyes to the artistic possibilities of modern rustic life presented without the sentimental airs and graces with which it had hitherto been tricked out? Looking back at the painter's artistic career, we find ourselves wondering whether the impulse thus communicated, though at what exact point it would be hazardous to affirm, was not for harm as well as for good—whether Walker's genius might not more legitimately have developed itself on the basis of national art, and with that simplicity free from all *arrière-pensée* with which it started.

CHAPTER II

The Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours; "Philip in Church"—At the Royal Academy—Caricatures—Visit to Paris in 1867—Influence of Jean François Millet—Visit to Venice—"The Vagrants"—"The Old Gate."

THE Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours showed itself much more ready to appreciate Walker's work than the Royal Academy had been; with them he came, he was seen, he conquered. The historian of the Society, Mr. Roget, tells us that he was elected an Associate on the 8th of February, 1864, on the strength of three out of four drawings sent to the spring exhibition; so that he actually made his first appearance at Pall Mall East full-fledged, judged, and accepted as worthy almost without probation. Before referring to these drawings it may be well to deal with one produced a year or two previously. This is *The Blackberry Gatherers* (collection of Mr. John Galsworthy), signed as no other work of the artist's with which we are acquainted is signed, "F. Walker, 1860." It is a curiously stippled little production, which, were it not for a certain personal grace and tenderness making itself felt even thus early, might almost be taken for a Birket Foster.

The water-colours sent to the Society in 1864 were *Philip in Church*; the large *Spring*, to the development of which from the earlier and smaller version, drawn for a woodcut, a passing reference has already been made; *Garden Scene*, a subject from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*; *Refreshment*, a design showing a group of children at dinner in a field, which, in black-and-white, had already appeared in the same year in *Good Words*. These first contributions to a water-colour exhibition show different degrees of maturity, and from the *Garden Scene*, to *Philip in Church*, the advance is so marked, that the two

drawings cannot well have been produced simultaneously. The *Garden Scene* (collection of Mr. George Smith) carefully stippled in the artist's first manner is hard and dry in colour, stiff in composition, and does not show a complete grasp of the personages represented—Rochester and Jane Eyre. It has, on the other hand, that perfect *naïveté* and sincerity which may win pardon for many faults, that realism, poetized by feeling but not by any tampering with everyday truth, which belongs to English Pre-Raphaelitism in its first and most genuine phase.

Philip in Church (collection of Mr. Henry Tate), is a fuller and more detailed realization of the beautiful woodcut which appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine*, but happily not a new variation or a fuller development of the subject. It reveals even more strongly the influence of this same Pre-Raphaelitism, as embodied above all in Sir J. E. Millais's earliest and most remarkable efforts. It is infinitely richer in colour, more perfect in drawing, happier altogether in realization than the companion picture just now referred to. Of its kind Walker has done nothing finer, perhaps nothing so fine, and one can well understand the verdict which a little later on, at the Paris International Exhibition of 1867, conferred upon the artist in respect of this very work, the second-class medal, a distinction not obtained by any other exhibited drawing in the same medium. What is particularly winning about the *Philip*, apart from its more easily reckoned up merits—its happy combination of wonderful finish with a sufficient breadth, and the essential quality of physical and spiritual life—is that it is typically English, altogether true and national in its growth. A radiance of sympathy emanates from the artist and envelops his creations, lighting from within with beauty a certain homeliness and dowdiness inherent to the subject. Inevitably, when a little later there is superimposed on this homely English realism an element of decorative classicism, beautiful in itself, but not legitimately evolved from its essence, the dramatic, the creative side of Walker's art sinks a little into the background, and what is gained in graciousness is lost in vital truth.

Our painter on this the occasion of his *début*, proved himself to be already a highly skilful executant according to the peculiar method which he had elaborated for himself. His results were obtained by a lavish use of opaque pigment, the high finish of every part, in which there was



Philip in Church.



Spring.

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nothing perfunctory or "niggling," being due to a juxtaposition of the minutest touches. This use of opaque body-colour was carried to an extreme point in such later water-colours as *Stobhall Gardens* and *Lilies*, where the high-lights are rendered with a regular impasto which at close quarters give these drawings a speckled appearance, such as may be noticed in Constable's later oil-paintings.

The next two years after the first important success had been achieved were not, if we are to judge by what was actually brought before the public, a period of rapid or sustained production. No oil picture saw the light, and even water-colours were few and far between. Among these may be mentioned *Denis Duval's Valet*, showing the redoubtable Madame Duval dressing the hair of her brave little son; this is an elaboration without material alteration of the illustration to Thackeray's unfinished novel in the *Cornhill*. It was exhibited in the winter of 1864-5, and to the same period must belong another similar drawing, *Evidence for the Defence*, derived from the same source, and giving the scene where little Denis proudly exhibits his pistol to his school friend.

By the 30th of November, 1866, on which day he became a full member of the Old Water-Colour Society, he had only, says Mr. Roget, after his initial appearance, added two more drawings to the summer exhibitions and three sketches and studies to the winter ones. Among these were, in 1865, the large *Autumn*, which is the second edition of the design for a wood-cut, already referred to; in 1866, *The Bouquet*, a gardener presenting a nosegay to two children dressed in black, which had also been preceded by a drawing on wood of somewhat different treatment; and in 1866-7, *The Introduction*, with figures in the costume of about 1800. He had not again at that date submitted himself to the ordeal of the hanging committee at the Royal Academy, but in 1866 exhibited his large canvas, *The Wayfarers*, at Gambart's Gallery in King Street, St. James's. The picture has already been incidentally described in its connection with the etching of the same name.

With *The Wayfarers* (now belonging to Mr. William Agnew), and the more celebrated *Bathers* of the subsequent year, Walker approaches the period which must be called that of his maturity as an oil painter, although, had he lived, this too would have proved itself, no



Autumn.

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doubt, to be but a transitional stage. The *Bathers* appeared at the Royal Academy in 1867—his second contribution to its exhibitions—and was there unfavourably hung, though not at such an altitude as its predecessor, *The Lost Path*. It is in many respects the best of Walker's productions on this large scale, broader and freer in execution, if less minutely finished and less exquisite in local passages of colour, than its fellows, more synthetic in treatment, and of a classicality sounder because arising more naturally out of the subject depicted. In an evening landscape studied, we are told, from Walker's beloved Thames between Cookham and Marlow, on the rush-grown banks of the low-lying river, beyond which rise tall trees bordering an unseen road, appear, under one of the painter's favourite warm evening skies, a company of naked youths and boys, some stripping themselves for the bath, some dressing again, some larking with the smaller fry, some puffing and blowing in the stream itself. If the composition is by no means perfect as a whole, it has many admirable groups and passages. It happily breaks, too, with its buoyant variety what would otherwise be the monotony of the long horizontal lines made by river and banks. Many delightful episodes arrest the eye by their truth and plastic beauty. See to the extreme right the youth hurrying along to the edge a half-unwilling urchin; and again the boy in his shirt hauling another up the bank; and yet again the young swimmer with his head only visible as he breasts the current. The central figure of a nude youth half-kneeling jars, on the other hand, in the midst of all this nature, though his head is beautiful as that of a Greek ephebus on the painter's favourite frieze of the Parthenon. Here the element of studied classicality imported *quand même* into the subject is felt to be an intrusion as it is also in the erect figure of the nude bather who stands dreaming a moment, as he strips off his last garment and braces himself for the plunge. The too deliberately sculptural character of these and one or two other elements of the design harmonizes but imperfectly with the undistorted truth, with the genuine spontaneity of the rest. There is, no doubt, in the unshamed nakedness of youth, so supple and free in movement, a kind of classicality of its own, but in these particular figures, though not elsewhere in the picture, it is carried too far, and obtained too much at the expense of the life and sincerity of characterization which are of the very essence of the subject. It is to be noted that,

here and in most other instances, Walker's flesh tints incline too much to a leathery brownness, and that the open-air effect of light playing upon the surfaces of the nude human figure is hardly realized. Thus, that the importation of this new element into Walker's art—or better this fuller development of a latent tendency—is not wholly due to an impulse given by contemporary French art is proved by the *Bathers*. Yet it is none the less to be inferred from facts, and from a consideration in chronological order of the work produced in these particular years, that its infusion into purely rustic subjects belonging to the England of to-day was due in a measure to such an impulse, though the method followed in suggesting ancient Greece under modern England was Walker's own.

Some of the most genuinely inspired of his drawings for woodcuts were those which illustrated Miss Thackeray's stories, and not a few of them were afterwards worked up more elaborately in water-colour, without any essential deviation from the original designs. One subject from *The Village on the Cliff* appeared at the Old Society in 1867, and in 1870-71 (to mention it a little out of its right place) another, the exquisite *Let us Drink to the Health of the Absent*—a perfect accompaniment in its reticent tenderness to the prose of the gifted writer, and technically remarkable for the skilful lighting, the extraordinary yet not excessive finish of the draughtsmanship. Two designs from *Jack the Giant Killer*, in Miss Thackeray's volume, *Five Old Friends, and A Young Prince* (published in 1868) were in the year of their production treated in water-colour, one *The Chaplain's Daughter*, the other one of our painter's masterpieces of invention and expression, *The Three Fates*, both these subjects being sent to the exhibition of the Old Society in 1868. The Clotho Lachesis and Atropos of Miss Thackeray's pathetic tale are three grim provincial old ladies of to-day—Walker's, to-day which is now a quarter of a century old—whose strange figures are woven together with a technical and dramatic subtlety, and treated with a pictorial charm, with a genuine humour not often paralleled in Walker's works. For humour, except in a few of his caricatures, was the quality least often found in what he produced. A ray of unshadowed joy at the more beautiful aspects of life often broke through the atmosphere of reflective melancholy which was his favourite mood ;

but this had not the boisterousness of a frank gaiety, still less the indefinable quality of humour. This quality of genuine humour was not always attained even in the regular caricatures in which he occasionally indulged, amusing as these were in their own quiet way, notwithstanding a certain stiffness and deliberation in the draughtsmanship which not altogether suits this sort of work, of which spontaneity is the essence. Well known is the drawing *Genius under the Influence of Fresh Air and Beautiful Scenery: Sunday, August 30th, 1863*,¹ with



The Three Fates.

caricatural portraits of two intimate friends, Mr. Calderon, R.A., and Mr. Stacy Marks, R.A.; and here both drawing and fun are a little forced. Another caricature marks the election of Sir Frederick Leighton and Mr. Calderon as full members of the Royal Academy in 1867, and shows the two painters enthroned side by side, receiving pontifically the homage of the professionals and worldlings who press forward to make obeisance to them.

¹ *Portfolio*, 1876.

Walker actually, in the year 1865, when the proprietors of *Punch* were casting about them to find a successor to Leech, whose death had taken place in October, 1864, executed several drawings—with not unqualified success—for the *London Charivari*. One of these was *New Bathing Company (Limited)—Specimens of Costume to be worn by the Shareholders*; another, *Captain Finks of the "Selfish" and his Friends enjoying themselves on the River*. In the latter Walker speaks, or rather draws, feelingly; for he loved the Thames above all things, and resented the selfishness of the blatant pleasure-seekers who with their steam-launches ruffled its waters and the tempers of those who made more legitimate use of them. The *Portfolio*¹ has in former years given some specimens of the sketches in which he made mock of his own inordinate passion for fly-fishing. One of the most amusing of these is the pen-and-ink drawing done in September, 1873, in answer to an alluring invitation to go North and indulge in his favourite sport. He shows himself tempted by visions of huge fish, one of twenty-six pounds, caught by a friend, being introduced to him by a kilted gillie, and others swimming around ready to be hooked. This is quaintly styled *The Temptation of St. Anthony Walker*. With these exceptional excursions into realms which were not his by right, we may mention the very large cartoon (85 by 51 inches) which he did for the theatrical poster advertising a dramatised version of Wilkie Collins's *Woman in White*; this was exhibited at the "Black and White" Exhibition of the Dudley Gallery in 1872. Judging by the preliminary study in the rich collection of Mr. J. P. Heseltine, this is rather too much in the academic and impersonal style, too little suggestive of the element of weirdness and mystery in the story itself.

Not to be classed as caricatures, though a gentle vein of merriment, appropriate, and indeed, indispensable under the circumstances, pervades them, are the three beautiful designs for invitation cards executed for Mr. Arthur J. Lewis when he played host to the Moray Minstrels at Moray Lodge, Campden Hill. Of the exquisite delicacy of these little decorative compositions the readers of the *Portfolio* have the means of judging from the reproductions now given for the first time—in two

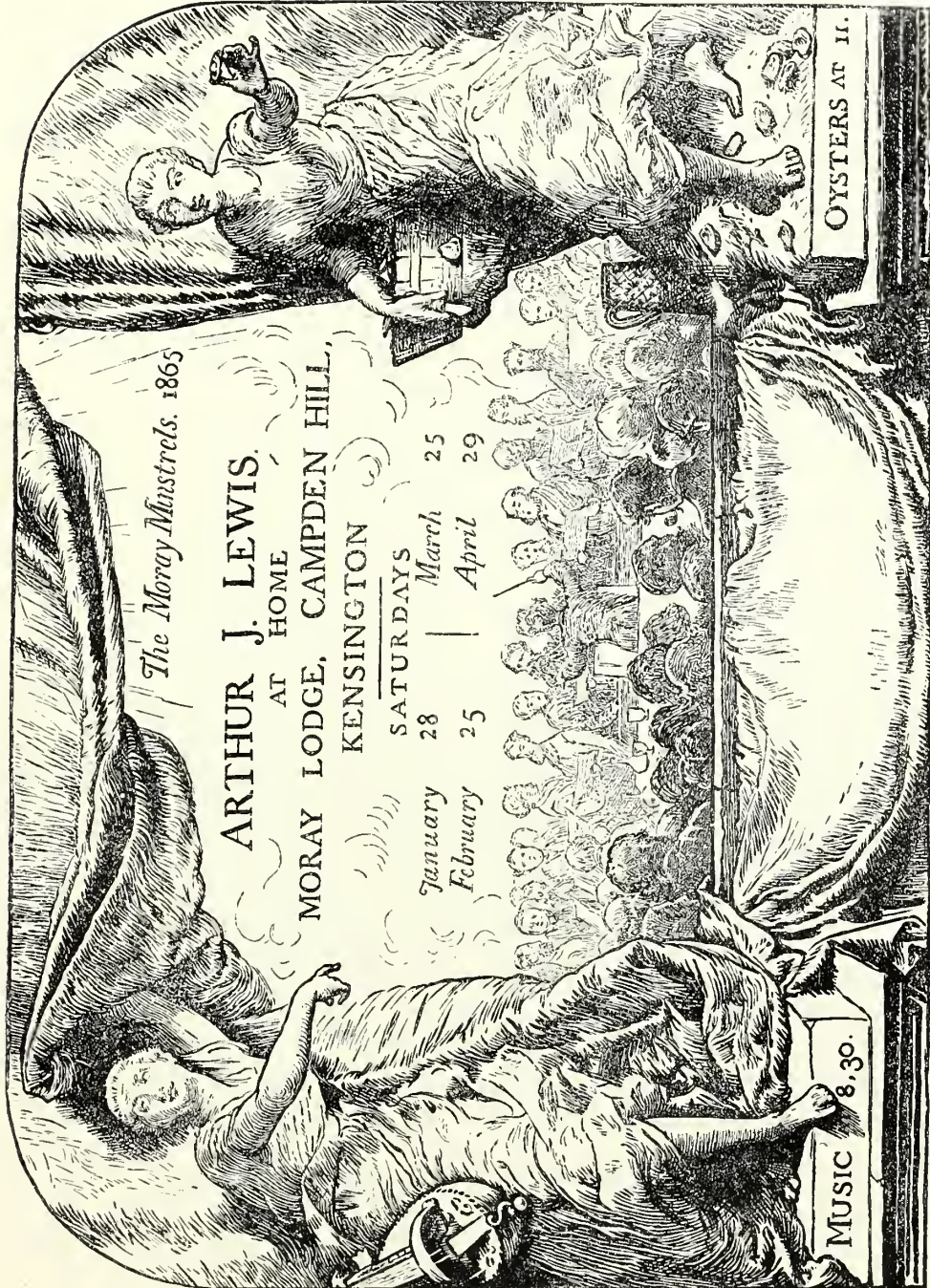
¹ In the *Portfolio*, volume for 1875.

instances from the cards themselves, in the third from Walker's own design. It is curious that this mock-Greek group of musicians and dancers, parodying, but ever so slightly, some Anacreontic scene from a



The Woman in White. Design for a Poster.

red-on-black vase of the best period, is Walker's only extant attempt to give form to a subject actually and avowedly classical, although the style of ancient Greece, and especially its style in sculptural relief, was rarely absent from what he did in his later years. The dates of these



The Moray Minstrels. 1865

ARTHUR J. LEWIS.
AT HOME
MORAY LODGE, CAMPDEN HILL,
KENSINGTON

SATURDAYS	
January 28	March 25
February 25	April 29

MUSIC 8.30.

OYSTERS AT 11.

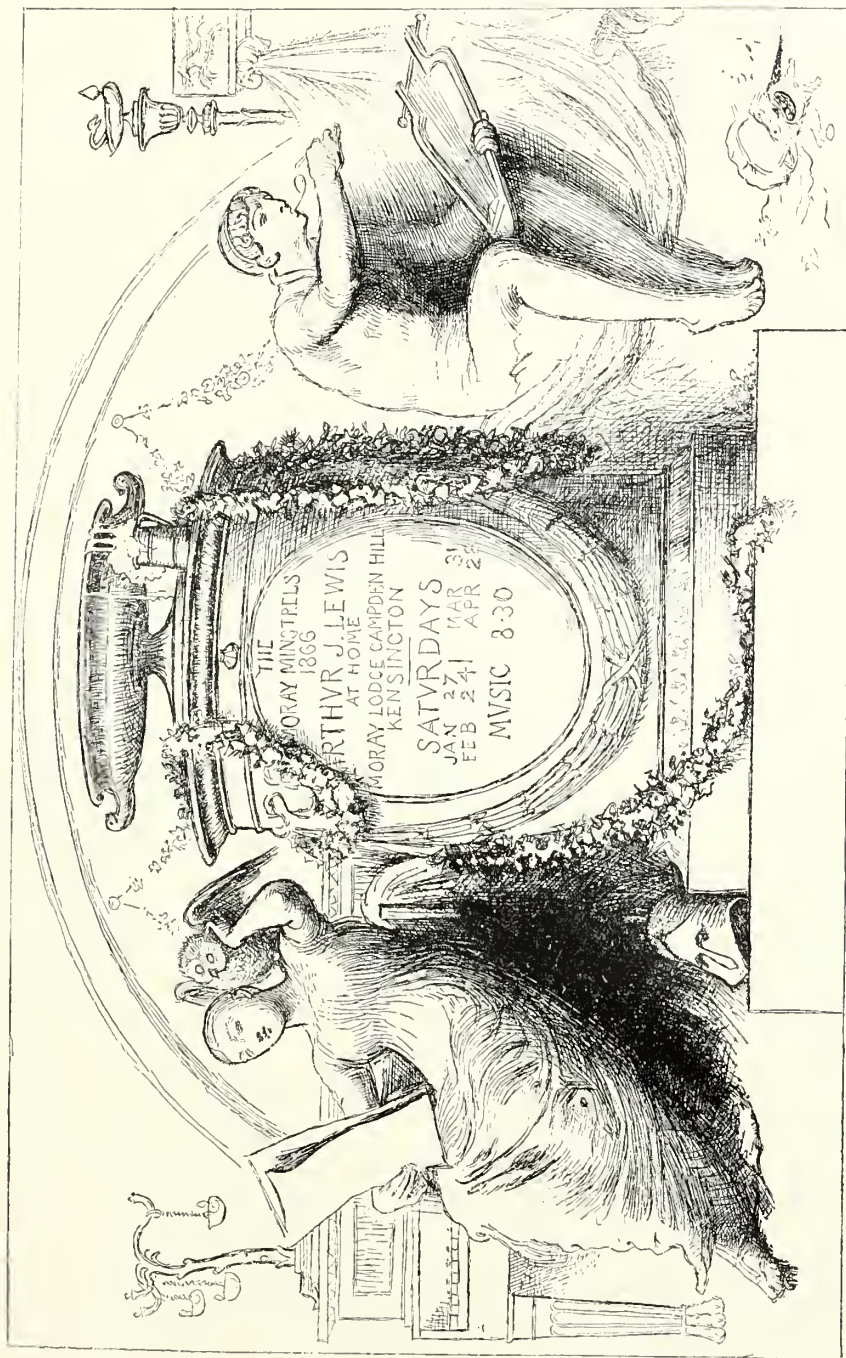
Invitation Card.

invitation cards were respectively 1865, 1866, and 1867, the designs having been made in the latter part of the years preceding.

But to return, after this too long digression, to the discussion of the artist's more important works in their proper sequence, and to the facts more directly bearing upon the evolution of these. And first, it is on record that he went to Paris for the Universal Exhibition of 1867, and this circumstance is of high importance in determining the degree of influence, if any, exercised over him by contemporary French art.

At this Exhibition Walker had his first great opportunity of seeing and judging Millet, who was there represented by no less than eight of his finest oil paintings, among these being such now famous examples as *Une Tondeuse de Moutons*, *Les Glaneuses*, *L'Angélus du Soir* (as it was then more accurately entitled), *Un Berger*, *Récolte des Pommes de terre*, and *Un parc à moutons : clair de lune*. M. Jules Breton, by whom, as has been pointed out, Walker had already been attracted on the occasion of his first visit, was represented by no less than ten important canvases, among which were *Le Rappel des Glaneuses*, *La Bénédiction des Blés*, *Les Sarcleuses*, *Une Gardeuse de Dindons*, *La Fin de la Journée*, and *La Moisson*. What was the impression made at the time by these works on Walker the silent there is—so far as the writer can gather—nothing definite to show, for on such subjects he would not, or could not, open his heart, even to his most intimate friends. But we may surely quite legitimately infer from the decided movement in a given direction imparted to his art about this time, and in particular from the increased effort to infuse into the treatment of rustic and open-air subjects a certain ideality of treatment, a certain rhythmic harmony—in fact the qualities essential to though not alone making up style—that he was deeply moved and permanently influenced by what he saw. Of plagiarism or of deliberate imitation, except in one exceptional instance presently to be dealt with, there can be no question. Walker's peculiar temperament did not permit him, even had he striven to do so, to take up permanently this sort of attitude towards any other painter, and his style was, even thus early, so far formed that the whole basis of his art would have been disturbed by the attempt to follow in the footsteps of another.

It has been said here more than once—it was an impulse received rather than an influence submitted to; the painter was already



Invitation Card.

prepared to look for certain definite things in the everyday humanity, in the everyday nature which may almost be said to constitute an integral part of that humanity. He was by the noble examples before him made to see more clearly certain higher possibilities in the rendering of the rustic scenes to which he felt himself increasingly drawn. Whether, given his strong artistic individuality with its well-defined limitations, given his way of lovingly dwelling on the particular rather than looking for the general in nature, we must judge him to have taken at this point the straight or the devious path, depends on our appreciation of the works now to be described.

The one instance in which it must be held that Walker's art is directly imitative of that of Jean-François Millet is the *Mushroom Gatherers*, in the collection of Mr. Somerset Beaumont, painted about 1868. The solemn, mournful tonality of the landscape, with its illumination of earliest dawn, but above all the figure of the man stooping, basket in hand, in the foreground, irresistibly reminds the beholder of the noble style, the balance in action, of the solemn poet-painter of rustic life. The design more particularly recalled is that of *Le Semeur*, which does not appear in the list of works exhibited in 1867. It had, however, been shown as far back as 1850, at the Salon of that year, and had been much popularised by a fine lithograph, so that an acquaintance with the design, if not the picture, may be presumed without taking too much for granted. And then again there were among Millet's works shown at the Universal Exhibition not a few from which a similar inspiration might well have been derived. To tell the truth, this solitary attempt of Walker's to make his own the manner and the subjects of Millet is not one of his happiest efforts, even though the tenderness which never deserts him gives undeniable charm to the conception. The attitude and action of the male figure in the English painter's *Mushroom Gatherers* is less legitimately explained, more compulsorily strained into classical grace than that of Millet's unforgettable figure. The picture in its present state is a finished sketch in oils on paper affixed to a panel. We learn from Mr. Comyns Carr that it was intended to develop it into a composition of more important dimensions, and that a large study for the landscape alone was actually found in Walker's studio after his death.

To about this period belongs, as may be inferred from its style, the exquisite water-colour, *In an Orchard*, belonging to Mr. J. P. Heseltine. This is almost as markedly an exception in Walker's *œuvre* as the picture just described, but a happier excursion, and one in an entirely different direction. The scene is a plantation of fruit-trees, depicted in all the glory of delicately tinted blossom and bright unstained foliage, under blue heavens literally flooded with joy-giving sunlight. Beneath the



Design for an Invitation Card.

trees, all youth and growth like them, a company of happy children toddle along. At first sight one might take the picture for an unusually subtle and lovely *plein air* of foreign growth, so boldly is the difficulty of full sunlight attacked and overcome, so happy the treatment of the coloured shadows. But the figures are English, and English in the best sense of the word; they are touched with just that sympathy, that reticent truth upon which it is difficult to insist too strongly, as one of Walker's finest and most distinctive qualities.



Myra's collection

The Mushroom Gatherers.

The Street, Cookham, exhibited in 1866-7 (and therefore noticed a little out of its right sequence), is one of the best of those more spontaneous designs in which the artist treated a simple subject with no other aspiration than to express by legitimate means all its natural beauty. With a well-suggested continuity of onward movement a young girl drives before her, through the broken-down red-roofed houses of the winding village street, a flock of cackling geese. What loving care



The Street, Cookham.

Walker gave to every essential detail of even such a subject as this may be gathered from the fact that the geese were studied from life, not once, but repeatedly, and at leisure, from some birds kept for the purpose in his small garden at Bayswater.

One of the loveliest of this class of purely English drawings, one of which might be said, with far more truth, what a French critic recently said of the marine pictures of Mr. Hook—that they seemed to breathe forth a mute prayer—is *The First Swallow* (collection of Professor

Hubert Herkomer, R.A.), the exact date of which does not appear to have been ascertained. A great white hawthorn in all the exuberant loveliness of full May mirrors its fragrant snow in a shallow stream, across which skims the swallow which gives its name to the picture. Through the sun and shadow of the walk just beyond move gently, in full enjoyment of the moment, a fair-haired young girl and a boy still younger, her brother beyond doubt—she sheltering herself from the sun's first hot rays, and encircling the boy with one arm—he dividing his enjoyment between his sister's caress and the big tome which he lazily holds. The may-tree in bloom is painted as perhaps no may-tree was ever painted before, with perfect accuracy in every detail, and yet with a breadth and feeling for the fairness of the thing as a whole, to which our painter did not always attain. The swallow and its reflection are taken a little too much *au pied de la lettre*, and the picture thus loses something in spontaneity and suggestiveness. The wonderful little figures are drawn with that exquisite finish which the artist was wont to lavish upon such elements of his designs. Beautiful in themselves they are manifestly too elaborate for the place they occupy in the picture; they could not be seen thus by the eye which takes in the whole. In a different way, but from something like the same cause, the sincere and uncompromising art of Bastien-Lepage suffered from his unflinching accuracy in detail, from the searching modelling of those unique rustic portraits which he was wont to frame in the landscapes of his beloved province.

Many of Walker's most celebrated water-colours date from the year 1868, and it must be owned that in none of these smaller works does the French influence which has been noted above maintain itself.

Those drawings have already been noticed which are elaborations in water-colour of illustrations done for Miss Thackeray's *Five Old Friends* and *A Young Prince*.

Lilies (collection of Mrs. William Graham) may be taken as typical of that class of drawing in which Walker has depicted with an unsurpassed lavishness of detail, with innumerable pure and delicate touches, the exuberant yet well-ordered splendour of the English flower-garden in full summer beauty. If we concede to the painter the peculiarity of his standpoint, and accept that in English water-colour so revolutionary technique which was his own invention, the thing could hardly be better



Illustration by J. W. G. 1876

Charles J. G. G. G.

The First Swallow.

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done. The only disturbing element is the figure of the young lady in summer attire who bends down to water the tall white lilies that give their name to the picture. This is strained and awkward; it wants the charm which the artist, as a rule, knew how to impart even to his mistakes. Of *Mushrooms and Fungi* (collection of Mr. Humphrey Roberts) it has been said, not without reason, that it showed a desire to emulate the achievements in the same style of William Hunt. If so, we must agree with Mr. Ruskin when he says, "It entirely beats my dear old William Hunt in the simplicity of execution, and rivals him in the subtlest truth." This group of creamy-white mushrooms and fungi of a disquieting beauty, with their lovely hues in vivid contrast to the bright green of the bed on which they lie, is far more delicate in colour than anything of Hunt's, and as accurate in execution. Moreover, it is a picture with a suggestive charm beyond its mere elements, which is just what Hunt's wonderfully stippled plums, hawthorn-blossom, birds' nests and eggs were not. The earlier artist was a master when he rendered the happier side of rustic life, when he inimitably caught and fixed the waggishness, the bubbling laughter of untamed boyhood; but those still-life pieces of his were surely an elaborate and capital mistake.

To this same year belong Walker's *Beehives*, and *A Stream in Inverness-shire*, the latter being one of his rare recollections of that Scotland which he loved mainly because it afforded him his favourite sport of salmon fishing, and but little on account of its scenic beauties. These were too obvious, they had been too frequently laid bare by others for a nature-lover of his temperament; and then they were so much less expressive, in their orthodox picturesqueness, of man and his struggles than the familiar yet never commonplace beauties of his own beloved Thames.¹

Proof of a first visit to Venice in this year is afforded by the water-colour, *A Gondola* (collection of the Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain, M.P.). Nothing is more instructive than an examination of this drawing, nothing more completely proves by negative evidence where Walker's talent really lay, and how entirely national it was in essence.

¹ A drawing *Fisherman and Boy*, the outcome of his fishing experiences on the banks of the Spean, was exhibited in 1867. *A Lady in a Garden, Perthshire*, appeared in 1869-70.

Away from the embrace of his own mother earth he lost his warmth and strength, he remained but coldly observant of what had often stirred in others a romantic passion. Here the peculiar swing and tread of the gondolier are accurately noted, the black and gold gondola itself is unexceptionably drawn and coloured, the carefully curled signora seen in the cool half-light of the little covered chamber is evidently a portrait-study. Yet how cold, how narrow and formal, how truly un-Venetian is the picture put together out of these elements, how



Mushrooms and Fungi.

little it recalls the sweet South or gives back that indefinable something which stirs the blood of the true Venice-lover!

The most important achievement of this year (1868) is the large oil picture, *The Vagrants*, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy, and now hangs in the National Gallery, for which it was purchased at the William Graham sale. The reproduction here given renders a detailed description unnecessary. In a marshy landscape, sad in its loneliness, but beautified by its yellowing autumn tints—such a one as shelters but hardly

comforts the wanderer—these vagrants, gipsies by their picturesque type, but not the true dark-skinned “Egyptians,” have halted for rest and refreshment. Though the figures are here more happily married to the landscape, more inevitably a part of it, both pictorially and in mood, than is the case with many of the important compositions of Walker’s last period, the faults as well as the qualities of this last period stand out here, already manifest. The peculiar method of elaborating not only the execution of a subject but its conception, of thinking the thing out as it were in parts, is the cause that we have here a collection of beautiful episodes bound together more or less in design, but not with that deeper, that not easily definable yet all important relation which was always present in Walker’s earlier and less ambitious efforts. The classicality is less marked, less *voulu* than in *The Old Gate*, *The Plough*, *The Harbour of Refuge*, but the effort to superadd a plastic and spiritual beauty rather than to free it from the husk which obscures it, is still too strongly felt. The erect figure of the moody, handsome gipsy, lost in her musings, but evidently dreaming no happy daydream, is a noble conception nobly realised ; there is a not inappropriate grandeur, too, in the figure of the mother bending over her child as she sits in front of the newly lighted fire of twigs. If the action of the boy feeding the fire is singularly trivial and even false, the two children, clinging together, are thought out with tenderness, though with a shade of sentimentality. Still we have rather the elements of the picture than the picture itself ; the elaboration from separate centres has arrested the sources of life. The finished pen-and-ink sketch of *The Vagrants*, which appeared at the exhibition of the old Society in 1870–1 was apparently not a preliminary study for, but a reduction from the original.

The Old Gate, which appeared at the Royal Academy in 1869, must count as one of the three or four representative performances in the same style upon which the fame of Walker is mainly built ; the others being *The Vagrants*, *The Plough*, and *The Harbour of Refuge*.

Through the weather-worn stone gate which gives its name to the picture, down the long flight of steps which leads from the manor-house, slowly walks the pensive widow, draped rather than clad in her sable weeds ; a sturdy country wench has opened the gate, and, as she passes through, gazes up sympathetically at her. Lower down on the steps



Madame T. P. V. S.

Madame T. P. V. S.

Vagrants.
Engraved by permission of Messrs. Thor. Agnew & Sons.

children are playing, and to the right of the picture is one of Walker's most characteristic groups, that of two workmen, man and boy, who, interrupting their walk with a respectful curiosity, await the coming of the widow. The man stands erect in the conscious pride of early manhood, wearing with the grace of untrammelled ease his suit of fustian ; with one hand he rests his spade on his broad shoulder, with the other, by a half unconscious movement happily indicated, he takes his pipe from his mouth. The youthful prentice workman appears somehow in attendance on the elder, much as the youths of the Parthenon Frieze are in attendance on the young warriors.

The figures are framed in a landscape prospect which in execution is one of the artist's best, and what is more, delicately harmonizes with the pensive mood of the central figure. Most accurately observed, too, and finely rendered is the moss-eaten stone of the old gateway. Stately naked trees, such as Walker loved to depict with incisive firmness of outline accentuate the middle distance ; beyond stretches tranquil, in the sadness of late autumn, a hazy blue distance, rendered with a rare charm—one of the very few prospects of the kind that our painter has attempted. To detail is to find passages of beauty almost everywhere. Unfortunately the weakest point in the whole is the figure of the widow, which is self-conscious and sentimental beyond anything else from the same hand. The rosy-cheeked, vigorous, country-girl, the children at play are in themselves well-considered and carefully balanced. Superb in strength and rhythm of design, and well harmonized with that of its companion, is the figure of the muscular young workman—a veritable life-study although thinly veiled in the coarse garments of the labourer. In painting, too, it shows an unusual freedom and brush-power, and if isolated might count as one of the painter's best achievements—an example of what our neighbours in artistic jargon style *le morceau*. None the less is this fine group a false note in the picture. It is aggressively Pheidian in its calculated classic grace, it savours a mile off of Elgin Marbles and Panathenaic Frieze. There has been revealed to the artist, whether by intuition from within or by impulse from without, that in the free yet necessarily well-balanced and regularly repeated movements of labour lurk the elements of classic beauty. He determines to find them there *quand même*, and not going the right way about—for he cannot if he would sacrifice the tendency to

individualise which is the very essence of his art—he finds himself obliged to force the note, and to press into his work what he cannot legitimately evolve from it. Millet's *Semeur*, his *Glaneuses*, his *Gardeuse de Dindons*, his *Bergère*, are classic, if you will, inasmuch as their beauty of expressive, synthetic design is got at in much the same way as the Greeks got at the designs of their friezes and their vases. But the Frenchman's figures are not conscious of classicality, they do not appear to be deliberately seeking for it, as do Walker's when they are of the type that has just been taken as an example. And then it must be said—though the writer should by perpetual carping expose himself to be called after the Proto-critic in Goethe's *Faust*, “Der Geist der stets verneint”—that all the component parts of this composition upon which the artist has lavished his skill and his sympathy—and the beauty of these has been freely admitted—do not make up a picture in the higher sense of the word. Judging the canvas as we must primarily from the painter's standpoint, we find that he has not got his subject together, that it straggles, that it does not express itself as a whole. Nor does it, judging from the dramatic and human standpoint, give the impression of *la chose vécue*, even transfigured in the golden light of art. The inevitableness of the scene, the natural cohesion of its parts, is not conveyed, and thus the greater part of the significance of the subject, whether pictorial or dramatic, is lost. One feels somehow that here, as in the kindred works of his maturity, Walker has not worked as Delacroix declared the painter should work—he has not seen his picture with the painter's vision complete and definite in its essential parts before he painted it.

To this year, 1869, belongs one of the most elaborate of the class of drawings in which that well-ordered paradise, the English garden, is taken as the chief theme—a class of which *Lilies*, already described, is the most popular example. This is *Stobhall Gardens*, which at the great sale of Walker's water-colour drawings at Christie's in 1886 fetched only £567 to the £1365 of its rival,¹ and yet must be allowed to take quite equal artistic rank with it. The warm gray stone of the old baronial mansion could not in this style be more finely rendered, nor the detail of all this wealth of

¹ *The Street, Cookham*, on the same occasion fetched £903. (J. L. Roget's *History of the Old Water Colour Society*.)

splendid summer blossoms be more wonderfully wrought out. As in *Lilies* the only drawback is the central figure—this time the queerly proportioned figure of a tall young lady seated on a knoll in the foreground near a sundial, robed in an ample velvet gown of greeny-brown hue. Just a breath of the later and less naive Pre-Raphaelitism seems to have passed over Walker here, and coloured his work, but luckily this influence, if it really did touch him with its wing, disappeared, leaving no other trace behind. Among other drawings belonging to this year are *A Lady in a Garden, Perthshire*; and *How dare you say such things to Jim Grandpapa* (collection of Mr. John Aird, M.P.).

CHAPTER III.

“*The Plough*”—*First Signs of Failing Health*—“*Marlow Ferry*”—*Associate of the Royal Academy*—“*At the Bar*”—“*The Harbour of Refuge*”—“*The Fishmonger’s Shop*”—*Winter in Algiers*—*Illness and Death*—*Unfinished Pictures*—*Etchings*—*Survey of his Work*.

AT the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1870 appeared *The Plough*, which is at once Walker’s noblest and most poetic invention, and of all his later oil pictures the one which is the most open to criticism as regards its realization. The landscape is pure English, simple and unaspiring in character, and yet the artist has been so possessed with the mysterious, transforming harmonies of sunset that he succeeds in infusing into his scene—without meddling with its structure as a Turner would without hesitation have done—something of a portentous, tragic splendour. If only the nature-motive had been as adequately expressed as it was nobly conceived, if only the human motive had been more firmly based on, and built up out of, natural fact, we might have had here a great picture. The foreground is one of those clear shallow streams, with low banks that Walker loved to paint; from these, and in their neighbourhood, spring here and there trees and tall shrubs, their naked branches outlined with a firmness and precision, with an accentuation of every detail that recalls Albert Dürer. In the middle distance, already half-veiled in the luminous half-dark of twilight, the plough advances slowly across the fields, with its team of grey horses, urged on, whip in hand, by a boy, while the ploughing husbandman follows at the tail. At the back rises, dyed a rosy red, a tall cliff, trenchant in tone against the clumps of trees that nestle for shelter into its hollow, against the grass with which its summit is crowned.

Above it, seeming to rest on its very shoulder, rises the huge mass of cloud which gives the keynote to the whole picture, frowning a flaming purple-red in its momentary glow. The crescent moon, silver in a corner of grey-blue sky, modestly peeps, almost unobserved, over the trees. What must first be blamed here is a certain airlessness in the whole. The cliff, the proper distance of which is accentuated by the diminutive size of the trees growing into it, has not its due aerial perspective; the great cloud seems actually, and not merely figuratively, to rest upon it—to be not only in the same plane but of the same substance. Worst of all is the much-vaunted plough itself, the most misdirected piece of rustic classicality to be found in any of the artist's works. The horses may be inspired by those of the Parthenon, but they are nerveless and without movement; the pretty boy who whips them up, and the ploughman himself may and do form charming lines with the team and the plough, but their movement is not nature, not even generalised nature with the unessential omitted. What we have is in the first place the attempt to emulate the rhythmic grace of the Greek bas-relief, and only in the second place that to render the true movement of man and beast in its natural beauty.

One feels somehow that Walker has here for once had his complete vision of his subject—not that of the eyes only but the inner mental vision—yet that he has been hindered by his slow, laborious system of evolution and his preconceived notions as to classic harmony from giving it a thoroughly true and spontaneous realization.

Is it pardonable to speculate as to what another artist would have done with this great motive? George Mason had hardly either Walker's passion or his power of penetrating deep into a subject, and he would perhaps have infused into his design less tragic power, and have coloured it more openly and avowedly with the idyllic character. On the other hand he would have produced a work more homogeneous, more complete, and better digested from the artistic standpoint; he would have seen his subject and continued to see it, as a whole predominant over its component parts, and not to be sacrificed to them. There would have been in the relation between the figures and the landscape just that inevitableness, that perfect balance which Walker could never quite command.

The Plough was last seen in public at the most recent of the winter exhibitions at Burlington House, to which it was contributed by the Marquis de Misa. Next to it happened then to be placed another fine sunset landscape, *The End of the Harvest*, by a too little remembered Scotch artist, George Paul Chalmers, who therein showed himself much affected by the art of Millet and Josef Israels, but technically an accomplished master, well able, though thus influenced, to stand by himself. Chalmers, as here revealed, had not a tithe of Walker's genius or his strength of artistic individuality, yet in some respects *The Plough* would not bear comparison with his picture. A prolonged contemplation would and did show that the one was the work of an admirably skilled and sympathetic adapter rather than of an original painter ; that the other was the work of a man of original genius still struggling for perfect command over his material, and hampered by his very style and method in the expression of a great moment in nature such as this which he had divined and sought to make his own. Still the lesser performance maintained a certain superiority over its more celebrated neighbour because it had the true painter's quality, because it was a complete picture of its kind, a complete though a reticent pictorial expression of its theme as its author understood it.

There exists a reduced version of *The Plough* in oil on panel, described as a finished study for the larger picture. Judging, however, both from the style of the panel itself and from Walker's system in such matters, it might more properly be put down as a finished reduction from the picture. Thus a pen-and-ink reduction of *The Vagrants* (1868) appeared at the Old Water-Colour Society in 1870 ; a water-colour version of the *Harbour of Refuge* (1872) at the same place in 1873-74 ; and a like version of *The Old Gate* (1869) in 1875.

A letter addressed in the May of this year to an appreciative friend who had written to congratulate Walker on the success of *The Plough* at the Academy, is worth mentioning as showing at once the sensitiveness and the perfect simplicity of the young painter. He writes : "I assure you I have a very keen desire for such spontaneous praise, especially from those whose taste I know to be good and pure. I can only say I am *seriously glad* that you admire my picture." He goes on to say that he is leaving for Venice next week, and that (first

ominous sign of what was to overtake him a few years later) he has had a succession of colds, for which he feels that complete change is the best cure. He appears, at the time, to have had plans for seriously working while at Venice, and for returning to his work in the following autumn; but there is nothing to show that these plans were carried out, almost the only trace of this second visit being a slight sketch of the house in which he lived in the City of the Lagunes, with Mr. W. Q. Orchardson (then A.R.A.) at the window. This was shown at the Memorial Exhibition in 1876, and again at Messrs. Dunthorne's in 1885.

Marlow Ferry, one of the most popular and one of the most beautiful of Walker's water-colours, was exhibited in 1870 at the Old Society's summer exhibition. Here the ferry-boat, rowed by a fair, sun-browned youth, who is just shipping his oars, is seen approaching the landing-place with its passenger; on the banks are figures of villagers and children feeding swans, and in one corner a group of lazy river-side gossips done to the life. The flesh-tints are the too hot and brown ones which Walker affects, the harmony, with its dominant note given by the red-brick houses, tawny in excess; but with his faults we have his exquisite charm of delicately detailed draughtsmanship, of perfect sympathy for his subject. Here, too, he is quite English and entirely himself, dropping that striving after Attic grace of line and movement which, in the opinion of the writer, never sits quite easily upon him or becomes an inherent part of his subject.

A quaint drawing, which was sent to the winter exhibition of the Water Colour Society in 1870-1, showed, with a trace of quiet humour such as on rare occasions crept in to the artist's serious productions, a coachman in a kitchen-garden cutting cabbages, and was entitled *The Amateur*. It re-appeared at Burlington House in 1891 under the title *Coachman and Cabbage*.

There was a technical obstacle to Walker's being elected an Associate of the Royal Academy, seeing that he had previously become a member of the Royal Water Colour Society. In the original statutes of the Academy was included a provision to the effect that no member of any other Society having the same or similar objects should be eligible for election—this being a bye-law aimed doubtless at that supplanted rival, the

Incorporated Society of British Artists. This rule was, however relaxed, in favour of Sir John Gilbert, upon whom the Associateship was conferred, when in 1871, he received the honour of Knighthood, as President of the Royal Water Colour Society, and advantage was taken of this opportunity to confer the like distinction upon Walker, who thus made his first appearance as A.R.A. at the exhibition of 1871.

On this occasion he brought forward *At the Bar*, an important if not a wholly successful effort to take new ground, or rather to return with added experience to the class of production to which his first venture, *The Lost Path*, belongs. It is somewhat difficult to speak of this unusual work now, since it no longer exists in its integrity. It is one of the very few extant attempts by Walker to deal with the human form on the scale of life, and as such it must be judged with all the allowances due to an experiment. From the Rembrandtesque gloom which enwraps the greater part of the canvas emerges the full-length figure of a woman still young in years, who in agonised suspense and bewilderment stands forth in the dock of a criminal court, in the presence of judges all but invisible to the beholder. A lurid light is concentrated on the wretched prisoner, now evidently at the turning point of her fate, and the only other human being allowed to be clearly visible is a warder, whose head appears at the foot of the picture. It was a happy idea to adopt the Rembrandtesque method in order to give force and unity to a scene of outward gloom and inward distress, and in the painter's conception he has avoided the dangerous rock of melodrama and reached true tragedy. A lack of breadth and solidity, such as might have been looked for under the circumstances, detracts, however, from the power of the work and gives to it, even apart from the injury to which reference will presently be made, something of a tentative and uncertain character—the appearance of a sketch on a large scale rather than a picture. Mr. Comyns Carr speaking of the picture as then exhibited, describes with unstinted praise the tragic expression of the woman's face—her “desperate and hunted aspect.” We know, however, that Walker, made extra-sensitive by criticism, which he could at no period bear with equanimity, and himself dissatisfied with what was intended to be the keynote of the whole—the climax to attain which all else was sacrificed or subordinated—scraped out the face, when he got the canvas back from the Academy,

with the intention of repainting it. This intention he, at any rate, never carried into effect, for *At the Bar* remained in this incomplete state at his death four years after, and was almost the only one of his important works not included in the Memorial Exhibition of 1876. It is an open secret that the head, as it now appears, was at the special request of the deceased painter's representatives, painted in by Mr. R. W. Macbeth, A.R.A.

It may be assumed that it is this, the most important version of the picture, which has this year reappeared in public, at the very interesting exhibition of Walker's works in oils, water-colours, and black-and-white, organized by the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists. The head in this example has a certain glassiness of texture, and although in it the beauty of the painter's conception is still to be divined, it cannot be said, as it now is, to deserve Mr. Carr's encomiums. The appearance of the picture thus confirms the truth of the assertion that it was repainted after the artist's death as has been stated; and, indeed, among his friends and those who know most about him and his art this is not denied. This being the case, it is somewhat surprising that when the present owner, Professor Silvanus P. Thompson, lent the picture to the Birmingham Society, no statement should have been made in the catalogue as to the dual authorship. A finished study in oils on canvas was exhibited at the Dudley Gallery in 1872, but this cannot well have been the version seen at Birmingham, the dimensions of which would appear to coincide with those of the original. Almost the only point in *At the Bar*, which recalls the Walker of the later years, the painter of rustic life set in landscape, is the pose of the woman's figure, which has in it something of studied elegance, of well-ordered design, which one would be more prompt to admire did it not too much appear as if introduced rather than observed. What is gained in harmony is lost in tragic intensity and significance.

Among the water-colour drawings exhibited in 1871 may be noted *A Girl at a Stile*; *The Housewife*, showing a woman seated in a courtyard shelling peas; and *The Old Farm Garden*. This last is one of the English garden subjects, to which the painter knew how to impart so much charm, but hardly one of the best.

To the year 1872 belongs *The Harbour of Refuge*, which is perhaps

the most widely appreciated of all Walker's works, and certainly contains the very essence of his latest style, with all its beauties and most of its defects. Nothing could well be lovelier than the *mise-en-scène* he has chosen to enframe his figures, this red-brick, purple-toned quadrangle of buildings,¹ with the finely-placed and finely-composed statue on its pedestal in the middle of the greensward made bright with star-like blossoms, with its flowering may-tree, only less beautiful than the one in *The first Swallow*. True, the apricot sky makes as usual with the brown flesh tones and the broken reds of the buildings a harmony too hot in its richness; but the combinations are in their way exquisite all the same. Most skilful use is made of different tints of blue, from deep rich indigo to a shade which is nearly grey, in relieving somewhat this over-richness. Nowhere has Walker lavished a greater skill on the painting of detail, or given a more jewel-like quality to his work, than in certain passages here; and yet there are many signs of a broadening of technique such as is not to be traced in earlier examples.

To judge firstly the pictorial, and secondly the human significance of *The Harbour of Refuge*, one must analyse it into its component parts, since it lacks unity not less of general impression than of composition. Not that the absence of a definite subject of the sentimental and anecdotic type is to be blamed; on the contrary, this is to be counted here and elsewhere as one of Walker's greatest merits. It is that his peculiar system of elaboration from several distinct centres renders his work difficult to take into the eye or the mind as whole, and appreciably best by passing from one to another of its motives. The best episode in the picture is the pathetically suggestive central group gathered round the statue in the centre of the quadrangle—that of the shipwrecked of life, anchored at last in a safe harbour after many storms. To the right we have the well-known figure of the mower, more classical still than the fustian-clad divinity of the *Old Gate*, and more self-conscious in its measured grace. To the left, slowly moving along the stone terrace, from which descends a flight of steps is a group more admired still, that of the sturdy, red-haired lass who, dreaming as she walks, supports on her strong young arm a poor old dame, *sans* eyes, *sans* teeth, *sans* everything: on the one hand dreams of the future, on the other dreams of the past. Here, as in the case of

¹ Studied from the Fishmongers' Almshouses at Bray.



the most widely appreciated of all Walker's works, and certainly contains the very essence of his finest style, with all its beauties and most of its defects. Nothing could well be lovelier than the *mise-en-scène* he has chosen to enclose his figures, this red-brick, purple-toned quadrangle of buildings, with the finely-placed and finely-composed statue on its pedestal in the middle of the greensward made bright with star-like blossoms, with its flowering may-tree, only less beautiful than the one in *The first Swallow*. True, the apricot sky makes as usual with the brown flesh tones and the broken reds of the buildings a harmony too hot in its richness; but the combinations are in their way exquisite all the same. Most skilful use is made of different tints of blue, from deep rich indigo to a shade which is nearly grey, in relieving somewhat this over-richness. Nowhere has Walker lavished a greater skill on the painting of detail, or given a more jewel-like quality to his work, than in certain passages here; and yet there are many signs of a broadening of technique such as is not to be traced in earlier examples.

To judge firstly the pictorial, and secondly, the human significance of *The Heron of Kent*, one must analyse it into its component parts, since it lacks unity not less of general impression than of composition. Not that the absence of a definite subject of one sentimental and decorative type is to be blamed; on the contrary, this is to be counted here and elsewhere as one of Walker's greatest merits. It is that his peculiar system of elaboration from several distinct centres renders his work difficult to take into the eye or the mind as whole, and appreciably best by passing from one to another of its motives. The best episode in the picture is the pathetically suggestive central group gathered round the statue in the centre of the quadrangle—that of the shipwrecked of life, anchored at last in a safe harbour after many storms. To the right we have the well-known figure of the mower, more classical still than the fustian-clad divinity of the *Field Gate*, and more self-conscious in its measured grace. To the left, slowly moving along the stone terrace, from which descends a flight of steps is a group more admired still, that of the sturdy, red-haired lass who, dreaming as she walks, supports on her strong young arm a poor old dame, *sans* eyes, *sans* teeth, *sans* everything; on the one hand dreams of the future, on the other dreams of the past. Here, as in the case of

¹ Studied from the Fishmongers' Almshouses at Bray.



The Harbour of Refuge.
Engraved by permission of Messrs. Tuck & Sons.

the splendid young mower, the contrast between youth and age is moving enough, but too deliberate, too much forced upon the beholder, to attain its full effect. The composition is straggling and episodic; it lacks concentration both of line and motive, and as in *The Vagrants*, and *The Old Gate*, we have rather beautiful elements of a picture than a picture. We may each of us pick out our favourite figure, our favourite passage of lovely detail or colour, and from no part is beauty absent; but we cannot, without preliminary study, take in the impression of the picture as a whole, because it is not seen or felt as a whole.

The *Harbour of Refuge* is now, through the munificence of Mr. William Agnew, the property of the nation. Its present place is on a screen in the Turner Room, where it is crushed by its mighty surroundings—those canvases so tremendous in power, even when they are mighty mistakes. A finished replica, executed on a smaller scale in water-colours (collection of Mr. Humphrey Roberts) appeared at the exhibition of the Old Society in 1873-4. It is perhaps in some respects an improvement on the original, of which it retains the beauties unimpaired, while reduction of size gives greater concentration. The movement of the mower—but this may be fancy—appears in this version rather truer to nature. This last was in the group of water-colours by Walker shown at Burlington House in the winter of 1891, on which occasion it was, for not obvious reasons, re-christened *The Vale of Rest*. There exists an unfinished design for the *Harbour of Refuge*, which was No. 149 in the Memorial Exhibition of 1876, and also, in the collection of Mr. Somerset Beaumont, a repetition of the two figures on the terrace—the young girl supporting the aged woman—this being one of the last works upon which the painter was engaged.

To 1872 belongs also *The Escape*, which is the working-out in water-colours of a drawing done for *Once a Week* in 1862. This may be regarded as the precursor of the unfinished design, *The Unknown Land*, the two versions of which will be referred to a little later on.

In the winter exhibition of the Old Society of 1872-3 appeared *The Fishmonger's Shop*, which many connoisseurs have held to be our painter's finest achievement in water-colour. Daring and splendid in the harmony of its tints, so finely balanced as to produce that unity of tone most difficult to compass with contrasting hues of a frank brilliancy, it is nevertheless

more of an amusing, richly-tinted object-study than a picture in the truest sense of the word. The group which is the centre of the colour-harmony,



The Fishmonger.

the blue-aproned, rosy-cheeked fishmonger who bends forward across the marble slab as he offers his fish to a gaily dressed damsel in the habit of about 1800, though it is well enough placed in the brilliant ensemble,

lacks vitality and significance. The *tour de force* lies in the happy combination of the bright green woodwork which frames the shop with the blue-green and the red of the sparkling fish, with the indigo blue of the jolly salesman's apron, and the yellow and tawny of the girl's pretty, old-fashioned costume, relieved by the coral pink ribbon in her hat. This is undoubtedly a brilliant performance of its kind, a nearer approach to the *bravura* of the purely technical exercise than anything Walker has produced. Yet it is difficult to understand on what grounds Professor Hubert Herkomer, R.A., is entitled to speak of it, as he is reported to have done recently in an address delivered at the opening of the Birmingham Walker Exhibition, as marking the climax of modern English water-colour. To accord such a place to it is surely to take a strange view of the past as well as the present of that most national branch of English art. Walker repeated the *Fishmonger's Shop* on a smaller scale in a drawing which was not publicly exhibited during his lifetime, but was No. 9 in the Memorial Exhibition of 1876.

This year, 1872, marked the climax of our artist's achievement. He had inherited a tendency to pulmonary disease, and just now when his talent was still rapidly developing itself and his technical powers had matured to a point higher than they had yet reached, his health began seriously to decline. In 1872-73 (or was it 1873-74?) he took refuge from the severities of a northern winter in Algiers, but became restless at his severance from art and friends, and lost whatever benefit he might have derived from the African sunshine by his return to brave the cold winds of March. Like Bastien-Lepage, who fled thither a few years later in the vain struggle with disease, he does not appear to have been deeply impressed—at any rate artistically impressed—with the splendours of the North African coast. There is nothing to show that, like his friend and brother in art, Mr. J. W. North, he took to the Algerian scenery, or seriously sought to interpret its peculiar charm. We know that for him even Scotland appeared too vast and too scenic; that the homelier beauties of the Thames Valley, the English scenes and the English life had his heart.

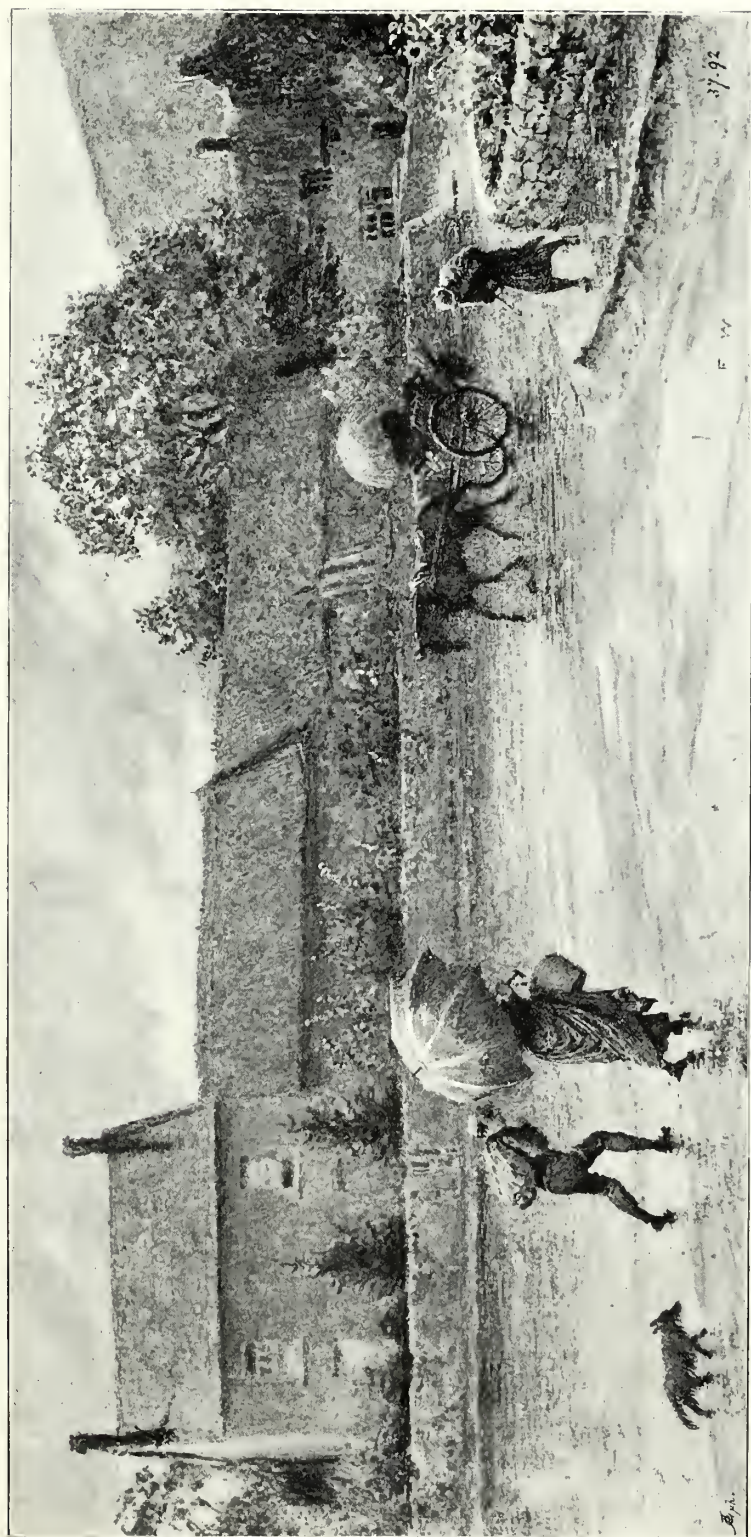
Walker was unable to contribute anything to the Royal Academy exhibitions of 1873 and 1874, and sent the Water Colour Society in the summer of the former year only *The Village*, the chief motive of which

is a red-brick bridge with little knots of country people on and about it. Marked by even more than the painter's usual truthfulness and exquisiteness of detail, this is slightly more prosaic and topographical in its careful finish than other similar productions. The smaller *Harbour of Refuge* was in the same place at the winter exhibition of 1873-4, but he was unrepresented at the summer exhibition of 1874, while at the winter one of 1874-5 only *The Rainbow*, an interior with two girls looking out of the window, reminded the public of their favourite.

Things were rapidly going from bad to worse with poor Walker, and it is pretty evident that, seeing how strong was the predisposition of his family to phthisis, he must have felt himself to be in a grave condition. There is reason to believe, however, that the doctors fearing that his intense nervousness might precipitate the catastrophe, spared him the knowledge that the danger was imminent. Thus, if Walker exposed himself more than under the circumstances he ought to have done, he was, it may be hoped, spared the worst of all griefs to the man in whom sickness has not extinguished youth and genius—that of seeing himself slowly die and feeling that he died with his work only half done, with his ideal only half expressed, with potentialities within him of far nobler things than had yet been achieved. It was thus that Bastien-Lepage died inch by inch, after a manful hand-to-hand struggle with the grim enemy, and with him the agony of the light prematurely quenched, of the hand no longer nerved to express what the brain conceived, was far worse than the physical suffering of dissolution. On the 23rd of July of this year¹ Walker wrote to S. P. Jackson, who had offered to help him as to lodgings: "I fear I must give up the notion of being at the 'Thames' side this season, for since I wrote to Leslie on the subject I have had a letter from my doctor, who thinks I ought for this season to avoid the 'Thames' as 'lowering' and 'relaxing' compared with certain spots I have mentioned to him as good from an artistic point of view—and as there is some chance of my going to Scotland a little later, perhaps it is better for me to give up the notion."

To the Royal Academy he sent in 1875 his final contribution, *The Right of Way*, which cannot be classed among his most successful efforts. It depicts a meadow with a winding stream, in the foreground of which

¹ J. L. Roget's *History of the Old Water Colour Society*.



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F. W.

Ed.

A Rainy Day at Cookham.

are two figures—a woman carrying a basket of eggs, and a little boy who, frightened at the advance of an ewe, clings to her skirts for protection.

While this picture was yet hanging on the walls came, with terrible suddenness, the news of the painter's death. He had gone to Scotland, to indulge once more in the sport which he so passionately loved, had been seized with a violent cold, which aggravated the most fatal symptoms of his disease, and succumbed after a very few days' illness at St. Fillans, Perthshire, on the 4th or 5th of June, 1875. He was buried at Cookham, his favourite Thames-side resort, beside his mother and a brother who had fallen a victim before him to the same fell disease. A memorial tablet with a medallion portrait carved in low relief by Mr. H. A. Armstead, R.A., was afterwards placed in Cookham Church by the painter's friends and admirers.

Among the unfinished works left behind was one canvas of importance, so far advanced towards completion that it has been exhibited on more than one occasion since the artist's death. This is called *Sunny Thames*, and now temporarily hangs in the picture gallery of the Guildhall, to which it has been contributed by Sir Charles Tennant. A little company of youthful rustics is seen fronting the spectator on a high bank by the river; one of them, a boy bigger than the others, sits on the edge fishing, his bare legs dangling over the rich red earth, overgrown with wildflowers and weeds. This figure is in itself, like so many of Walker's single figures, a noble design, but the picture as a whole is, perhaps on account of its unfinished state, unpleasantly hot and "foxy" in colour. It compares unfavourably with the much smaller rendering of a similar subject by George Mason, known as *Young Anglers*, and last seen at the winter exhibition of the Royal Academy of 1893-4. Here the bright grey sky, the pale waters, the landscape, the little fisher-folk seem all to fit naturally into one undivided and indivisible whole, which is just what the component parts of Walker's pictures so rarely do.

A peculiar interest, a peculiar pathos, attach to one composition, *An Unknown Land*, of which two quite distinct versions, both of them still in the stage of the preparatory sketch, were found with the ill-fated painter's artistic remains. It is hard to resist the conviction that here



The Unknown Land. First design.

solemn thoughts prompted Walker to revive an earlier design, already twice seen in progressive stages of development. For once he not only develops, but altogether widens and transfigures his invention. In the first of the two unfinished designs the boat of the explorers, who have reached the unknown shore, is being hauled on to the beach by statuesque, semi-real youths, such as he loved to depict, in a light which may be that of sunrise or sunset, but in its rainbow-hued changefulness is more like the latter. In the second and finer design—that belonging to Mr. H. R. Robertson—Walker allows himself to float away from and above the reality on which he has hitherto based all his pictorial inventions. There is something of the poet-painter's radiant vision, of the mystery and vastness of the unknown, in this bold powerful group, forcefully outlined against the blazing orb which rises, huge and awful, from the bosom of the sea, filling all space with its rays.

Walker etched a few plates which did not appear during his lifetime, but were after his death purchased and brought out in a complete set of six by the well-known print-publisher, Mrs. J. Nosedá, of 109, Strand. The first of these were necessarily of a tentative kind, but in the later numbers of the short series which represents all that he had leisure to produce the progress in technique is very marked, and it is made clear that with more practice he might have commanded a considerable success in this side branch of his art. The etchings are published without any titles, so that by way of identification one has to make these for ones self. The first and most tentative of the set shows a girl shelling peas in the back-yard of a London house. The artist himself called it, we are told, after the huge butt which is a prominent and unlovely feature of the whole, *Mrs. Collins's Waterbutt*. This plate he took to his friend Mr. J. P. Heseltine, of Queen's Gate—the noted collector whose name there has been occasion to mention more than once already in the course of these remarks—and they bit it together. The result was not very successful, but it was the etcher's first attempt, and he was not then familiar with the small technical difficulties which nothing but experience can overcome. The second in order of date of the set we may guess by its stiffness to be the *Little Girl Eating Porridge*, a design more or less in the style of William Hunt. His own portrait, an etching which was never carried beyond the head, shows him with hair picturesquely



The Unknown Land. Second design.

dishevelled—a typically Bohemian apparition. An unfinished study, more delicate and reticent than strong, has as its motive an old couple of primitive aspect seated in a kitchen—she working apparently at a stocking, he with a clay-pipe in his hand, and a beer mug at his side. Then we have a preliminary study, principally in dry-point, for the old man in *The Wayfarers*. Last, and best by far, comes *The Wayfarers* itself, that splendid piece of incisive realism to which reference has already been made in discussing the picture of the same name. The execution of the plate shows the artist very far on the way to high accomplishment as an etcher. For truth and power of suggestion these two figures are at least as fine as anything of the kind Walker has done, although they may not be acceptable to those who prefer the milder and less boldly characterized version of the oil-painting.

Not much has been said in the course of these remarks about Walker the man, and that for many reasons. In the first place his life was not, as regards its outward landmarks, an eventful one. Like that of so many artists of genius and ardent endeavour it was swallowed up in his life-work, and had no independent course. Still, while nothing is more unsafe than to draw rule-of-three inferences from a man to his work, and *vice versa*, it is always interesting to study the artistic temperament—to note where it is at one with, where it diverges from the human personality. In England we are wont to exercise a certain reticence in such matters, and to refrain for a long space of time from lifting the innermost curtain which veils the private life of those whose works have made them in a sense public property. In France the biographer is franker, or more indiscreet if we like to call it so; and the result is that we get a more complete picture of the man, with those strongly marked lights and shades which naturally go to make up the figure of the creative artist. Thus not only the life but often the art is made more clear to such students as are not content with the mere surfaces of things.

It must be left to those who knew Frederick Walker, who were bound



Portrait of the Artist.

to him by bonds of friendship or family ties, to tell, if they can, the story of his all too short life, and fill up the outlines of the character to which not even his most intimate friends were sure that they possessed the key. It has been seen that from the very start he was nervous, feverish, excitable, of a physical temperament which is best described by the adjective *maladif*, while he remained, even to those brother artists to whom he gave his friendship and confidence, almost impenetrable on all subjects connected with his art. Not only did he never formulate or dogmatize, but he hardly ever even stated a point of view in words, or underlined a preference. The curious thing was that this physical unhealthiness never coloured his art, as physical disease has been known to do in the case of more than one great artist who could be named. All it did was to impart to it a more tremulous sympathy, a more regretful tenderness. It is easy to understand how, to a nature such as his, criticism—to which, indeed, the painter rarely, if ever, submits with the good grace which in the man of letters so often disarms antagonism—should have been intolerable. Even his most intimate friends, when they visited his studio, were not allowed to see the unfinished canvas; the easel was hastily wheeled round with its face to the wall! Perhaps, seeing what Walker's temperament was, he chose, in so doing, the wisest course. Mr. Comyns Carr has well said on this point: "With a nature so keenly sensitive his own criticism of himself was perhaps all he could endure. The advice of others, however well intended, would only have had the effect of paralysing his efforts." That this was indeed the case is best shown by the fact that adverse criticism induced him to obliterate in *At the Bar* what has been described by those who remember it, as "one of his most singular and exceptional efforts," and that he seems, if we may judge from the result, to have distrusted his power to improve upon what he had destroyed.

Mr. Hodgson, R.A., in *An Artist's Holidays*,¹ has given a vivid picture of his laborious method of conceiving and working out a first sketch:—
 'Never did artist groan as he did in the throes of production. It was painful to see him; he would sit for hours over a sheet of paper, biting his nails, of which there was very little left on either hand; his brows would knit, and the muscles of his jaw, which was square and prominent,

¹ *Magazine of Art*, September, 1889, pp. 388, 389.

would twitch convulsively like one in pain. And at the end all that could be discerned were a few faint pencil scratches, the dim outline of a female figure perhaps, but beautiful as a dream, full of grace, loveliness, and vitality. A few scratches would indicate a background which seemed a revelation, so completely was it the appropriate setting to the figure."

Mr. Hodgson gives us in this same paper a fearless and searching criticism of Walker the man, the most complete in its sharp outline that we at present possess, though it errs, perhaps, in the failure to perceive that mind and body cannot in summing up, as he does, be dissociated. The irritating traits so vividly noted being manifestly but an outcome of the terrible disease which, as the writer himself records, from the first held Walker in its grip, should not have disintituled the man to one jot of the sympathy which is so generously accorded to the artist.

It is necessary to quote further from this firmly sketched portrait ; for the *De mortuis* is surely not applicable to men of Walker's stamp, but only to the smaller fry, in respect of whom British reticence and decorousness enjoin that an even balance should be struck :—

"Everything about him betokened an early death, not because he was frail and delicate, for frail and delicate men sometimes drag out the thread of life to great lengths, nor, as in the case of his host (Richard Ansdell, R.A.), was he in any danger from over-industry and application. His mind was not very cultivated ; he was inarticulate, and his conversation gave no idea of his powers. His intellect, I should opine, was of rather a slow and lethargic cast. . . . There was a taint of hereditary disease in his blood, and its development was no doubt hastened by an abnormally irritable and sensitive nervous system. There was a strong tie of friendship between Ansdell and him, and nothing could be stranger than the contrast between them ; the one a man of iron nerve, whom no fatigue, no misfortune or annoyance could perturb—proud, resolute, and self-relying ; the other blown about by every wind, childishly elated at one moment, depressed almost to despair at the next. . . . When annoyed even by trifles, he was beside himself. He had a passion for telegraphing ; when the fit was on him he would send off messages at intervals all day. It was terrible to hear him complain of the injustice and ill-treatment of which he supposed himself a victim, quite unreason-

ably as it appeared to me, as the world seems to have agreed to treat him indulgently, as a delicate and spoiled child of genius. He was passionately fond of fishing, and seems rarely to have touched a pencil when away from home for a holiday. . . . In speaking of painting, he once said that 'Composition is the art of preserving the accidental look,' which is as good as anything that has been said on the subject. He had splendid gifts ; but some malignant fairy, some disappointed godmother at his baptism, must have filched away the most essential concomitant, without which even happiness seems impossible, the gift of a placid mind, and that equipoise of faculties which leaves the mind serene and imperturbable."

It is necessary to say a word or two more about Walker's relation, or supposed relation, to two contemporary Englishmen whose names have often been bracketed with his. In the course of these remarks the art of George Mason has already been discussed, and such a discussion is indeed inevitable when it is sought to give a picture of Walker and his time. While it would undoubtedly be wrong to assume an intimate artistic connection between the two men, or a leaning of one on the other, it is an over-statement of the true position to assert that the apparent relation between them is only a superficial one, depending upon their choice of subjects—upon their predilection for rustic figures of our own time, framed in landscape having more than a casual and exterior relation to those figures. The real link between Mason and Walker is that both saw the truth that harmony, grace, rhythm—the elements of style—might be revealed where they lay half hidden in the everyday subjects of to-day, and that without undue falsification in distortion ; that the inherent pathos of life and of nature is not best expressed by pictorial anecdote or by a cheap sentimentality.

Whence each derived impulse and vivifying power must remain a point for inference rather than assertion. An effort has here been made to show what fired the train in Walker's case. The genesis of Mason's art is clearer, since we must take into account his long residence abroad, and the influence which Sigr. Costa cast over him on the one hand, and—as we do not know for a fact, yet must necessarily infer—M. Jules Breton on the other. It may be that the artistic passion glowed with less intensity in Mason than in Walker, that his genius was of a less original,

a less national, type ; but he was certainly the more complete, the more perfectly balanced artist of the two. His aim was—like that of Millet



Boy Looking at a Dead Bird.

himself, with whom he had otherwise little or nothing in common—to see men and things in a large synthetic way, to express the beauty and harmony of the type, not the individual ; to marry the human element

to the environing landscape so that the one cannot be conceived of without the other. Making the necessary sacrifices, and going perhaps too far—seeing what were his subjects—in the direction of elegiac grace and the suggestion of linked and balanced movement, he expressed his idea to the utmost, as Walker, torn by the two conflicting currents of his nature and his will, was never able to do. We may find passages in *The Plough*, *The Old Gate*, *The Harbour of Refuge*, that move us more deeply, that have a more penetrating, a more intimate charm than anything in *The Evening Hymn*, *The Harvest Moon*, or *An English Pastoral*. We may note in Walker's work wonders of delicate execution such as Mason did not attempt; but as works of art, as things of absolute accomplishment in their own particular way, Mason's best productions must take precedence of Walker's.

It is well known that personal sympathy, as well as a certain community of aim in art, closely united Walker to another contemporary, Mr. J. W. North, A.R.A. It has even been said by those well qualified to speak on the point, that after Walker had become acquainted with Mr. North, his colour became less chalky, more various and richer, his landscape "took a deeper, richer glow in the shadows, as if in the twilight they exhaled the heat of the long summer day." This might well be so, since the relation between the landscape of the two artists is manifest even to those who have never heard of their personal connection. On the other hand, we have seen how self-centred Walker was, no less in art than in life; that he was open on occasion to impulse from without, but much less easily to an influence affecting the minutiae of technique. There are no such startling breaks or leaps in the evolution of his landscape as absolutely to preclude us from assuming that it was self-developed; so that its exact relation to Mr. North's must remain a point to be decided by individual appreciation, unless further and more direct evidence be brought to bear upon it by those near to the sources of information. It was a happy inspiration of the Royal Society of Birmingham Artists to juxtapose in their recent exhibition the works of the two painters. While the undefined relation between them was affirmed, it was made additionally clear that Walker, whatever he may have owed to his friend and companion in art, ended by overshadowing him on his own ground. The strength, the definiteness of Walker's draughtsmanship, the firmness

and beauty of his patient yet never trivial execution, caused Mr. North's landscapes, with all the over-subtlety of their loving elaboration, with all the charm of their tangled luxuriance, to look a little pale and ineffectual.

Mr. Hodgson, elsewhere in the sketch from which so much has already been quoted, thus praises the painter :—" To Walker we may truly apply Charles Lamb's words, ' Upon him his subject has so acted that it has seemed to direct him, not to be arranged by him.' He had the divine faculty of inward sight ; his vision was slow to obey the summons, he had to perform many exorcisms and incantations, but it arose at last, and once there he held it fast."

This is high praise indeed, and fully deserved by the earlier, if not wholly by the more mature works of the artist. The Walker of *The Lost Path*, of *Philip in Church*, of *The First Swallow*, even up to a certain point the Walker of *The Bathers*, was so acted upon as to be directed by his subject. The Walker of the works by which his highest fame has been won, of *The Vagrants*, *The Old Gate*, *The Plough*, *The Harbour of Refuge*, was acted upon by conflicting influences, and finally drawn to adopt or rather to form a style which was not, in the opinion of the writer, that in which his genius could find the freest and truest expression. It matters little, after all, whence came the spark which set alight again his dormant love of Greek art, with its essential characteristics of synthetic simplicity and idealised truth. On the one hand, his blood was fired with the desire to evoke, to lay bare, the hidden classicality in nature, on the other the very minuteness of the gaze which he lovingly fixed upon humanity and nature rendered him incapable of the sacrifices necessary to the attainment of the classic ideal. He must perforce dwell on every lineament of the human face, on the individual man, not on man the type or the class. He loved every blossom, every leaf, every branch, every meadow, every eddy of the stream, every turn of the road, every moss-grown stone and purple-red tile of the house ; from nothing beautiful under the heavens could he bring himself to part. Necessarily he thus sacrificed much ; putting force and unity of impression, largeness and simplicity of intention and execution, truth of atmospheric envelopment, into the background, and preferring to them exquisiteness of local truth and wealth of isolated and highly developed motives. Thus, when

he willed to be Greek *quand même* in depicting English rustic life, and yet to remain realistic and truthful, he was manifestly, with his individuality, and with his artistic equipment, striving for the impossible. Unconsciously he was induced to force into, instead of evolving from, his rustic figures a classicality, a rhythmic grace, which might well lurk in



Onion in Flower.

them, but which the portraitist of the individual did not and could not go the right way about to lay bare.

It was otherwise with Jean-François Millet, whose name naturally presents itself in this connection. It is by a legitimate process of synthesis, such as the Greeks themselves adopted, by stripping off the outer husks of men and things, by effacing the individual and leaving only the general and typical, that he arrived at a true classicality more

nearly akin to the Greek spirit than anything that modern art can show. His peasants are not the "ambitieux" that Delacroix called them, because they are unconscious that they represent more than *The Sower*, *The Gleaners*, *The Man with the Hoe*, *The Shepherdess Tending her Sheep*, *The Washer-Woman*, *The Slayers of Swine*. Still, they are not only magnificent pictures of the things for which they primarily stand—pictures in which the higher and more typical truth is secured by the sacrifice of the lower—but they are the noblest representations of humanity in its struggle with Nature—mother or step-mother. Who shall quarrel with Millet if his *Man with the Hoe* typifies all labour with its never-ending outlook; if his *Mother watching her Child* is all maternity with its untiring solicitude? Who shall complain if on many another canvas that could be named, he shows—as the painter, not the lyrist or the argumentative man of letters—the indefinable links between man, the higher, nobler animal, but still the animal, and the patient beasts of burden of whom he is one—between man and the earth, which is to conquer and cover him at last?

It may well be doubted, as those who know Walker best have doubted, whether, with the peculiar artistic temperament, with the peculiar quality of artistic vision which marked all that he produced, he would ever have acquired the unity of style, the power of selection, the breadth of view necessary to give full value to the subjects he affected, if they are to be interpreted in the manner in which he in his later style strove to interpret them. It is probable that throughout he would have remained the portraitist of nature and of man—the rare and tender portraitist, it is true, prompt to divine the least obvious beauties of what he saw, but still the portraitist. This being so, and his very nature in its essence rendering it impossible that he should renounce the presentment of the individual so as to attain to the presentment of the type, it is not easy to divine how the vain struggle to reconcile two tendencies absolutely antithetical would have ended. Would Walker have persevered in the path upon which he had entered, would he have continued to elaborate works full of beauty—or rather of beauties—yet also of irreconcilable contradictions? Would he have sacrificed his tendency to the individualization of men and things in order to obtain that large synthetic grace, that sculptural harmony of line and movement after which

he so evidently thirsted? Would he with increased skill and increased sensibility have returned to the unquestioning simplicity, to the naive and true mode of interpretation of his earlier manner? As it is, it must be said, with all respect and admiration for a painter whose artistic personality is so exquisitely sympathetic, so interesting in its struggle for a more complete and homogeneous development, that we have in the art of Frederick Walker, as it presents itself even in its latest phase, promise rather than complete achievement, the scattered and even, it may be said, the conflicting elements of beauty, rather than beauty in the sense that beauty means unity, strength, and complete significance.

Whatever view we may take as to the exact place of Walker's life-work in the English art of this latter half of the nineteenth century, it is impossible to regard him otherwise than as one of the most interesting figures of that time; so isolated does he stand among the painters his contemporaries, so little does he owe on the whole to English or foreign example; so strenuous, so pathetic is his striving after the higher ideal as he saw it, or deemed that he saw it. During the years that have elapsed since his death his fame has stood higher far than ever it did in his lifetime, and there is as yet no outward sign that it has diminished or will diminish. It is possible, nevertheless, that posterity may not uphold to the full the view of the last two decades. As to this it would be mere presumption to hazard a prophecy, especially on the basis of an appreciation which is certainly at present not that of the majority. Even should a later and more dispassionate judgment not completely confirm the peculiar position accorded to Walker, if not above, yet at any rate apart from that of a home-grown artist of his day, it will assuredly assign to him a niche in the British Walhalla, and uphold his reputation as one of the most English of modern English painters—perhaps the one in whom the wistful tenderness which goes so far to redeem our time of trouble and misgiving, in art as in life, has found the most touching expression.

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